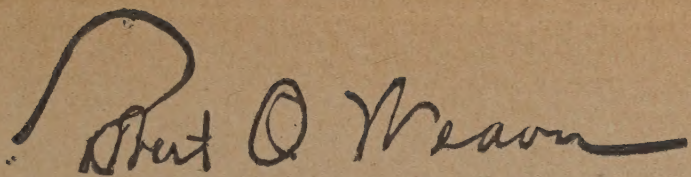

JOHN F. AUTRY

THE PREACHER'S COMPLETE HOMILETIC COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

THE PREACHER'S COMPLETE HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT

ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN

WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDEXES, ETC., ETC.

By VARIOUS AUTHORS

In Twenty-One Volumes

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND LONDON

A HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

CHAPTERS VII. to VIII.

BY THE

REV. W. H. BOOTH, REV. J. H. GOODMAN

AND

REV. S. GREGORY

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON

NEHEMIAH.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] "The second section of this book (chaps. vii.—xii. 43) furnishes a description of the further efforts of Nehemiah to increase and insure the prosperity of the community in Judah and Jerusalem: first, by securing Jerusalem from hostile attacks; then, by seeking to increase the population of the city; and, lastly, by endeavouring to bring the domestic and civil life of the people into conformity with the precepts of the law, and thus to furnish the necessary moral and religious basis for the due development of the covenant people."—*Keil.* It is generally supposed that Nehemiah's return to Persia must be inserted after xii. 43; the remainder of the book narrating his later reforms. Bishop Hervey, however, suggests that the work stopped immediately after the events narrated in vi. 16—19, and that chapter vii. goes on to relate the measures adopted by Nehemiah upon his return with fresh powers. 1—3. *The watching of the city provided for.* 1. **Porters . . . singers . . . Levites were appointed]** In olden time each had a separate work. *The porters* guarded the gates of the temple. They were reckoned by genealogies, and separated into various divisions (see 1 Chron. ix. 17—27; xxvi. 1—19). *The singers* had charge of the service of song (1 Chron. vi. 31), and "their brethren *the Levites* were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God" (1 Chron. vi. 48). "Under the present extraordinary circumstances Nehemiah committed also to these two organized corporations the task of keeping watch over the walls and gates of the city, and placed them under the command of his brother Hanani and of Hananiah, the ruler of the citadel. This is expressed by the words (ver. 2), 'I gave Hanani . . . and Hananiah . . . charge over Jerusalem.'"—*Keil.* **2. The ruler of the palace]** The marshal or chamberlain of the vice-regal court which Nehemiah had maintained in Jerusalem.—*Jamieson.* **3. Let not the gates be opened until the sun be hot]** In the East it is customary to open the gates of a city at sunrise, and to bar them at sunset—a rule which is very rarely, and not except to

persons of authority, infringed. Nehemiah recommended that the gates of Jerusalem should not be opened until broad day. An earlier opening might expose the city to a sudden surprise. By day the special guard were to watch; by night the inhabitants. **4. The city was large and great, &c.**] Broad on both sides regarded from the centre. After the fashion of Oriental towns, the houses standing apart, with gardens and orchards intervening. **5—69. Genealogy of those who came at the first out of Babylon**] "Nehemiah discovered a register of the first detachment who had come under the care of Zerubbabel. It is transcribed in the following verses, and differs in some few particulars from that given in Ezra ii.; but the discrepancy is sufficiently accounted for from the different circumstances in which the two registers were taken—that of Ezra having been made up at Babylon, while that of Nehemiah was drawn out in Judæa, after the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. The lapse of so many years might well be expected to make a difference appear in the catalogue, through death or other causes; in particular, one person being, according to Jewish custom, called by different names. Thus Hariph (ver. 24) is the same as Jorah (Ezra ii. 18), Sia (ver. 47) the same as Siaha (Ezra ii. 44), &c. Besides other purposes to which this genealogy of the nobles, rulers, and people was subservient, one leading object contemplated by it was to ascertain with accuracy the parties to whom the duty legally belonged of ministering at the altar, and conducting the various services of the temple; and for guiding to exact information in this important point of inquiry the possession of the old register of Zerubbabel was invaluable."—*Jamieson.* **39—42. The priests**] Only four of the courses returned from the captivity. **43. The Levites**] "Assistants of the priests in Divine worship."—*Keil.* **44. The singers**] Only sons of Asaph returned. **45. The porters**] Door-keepers.—*Keil.* **46—56. The Nethinims**] See on chap. iii. 26. **57—60. Solomon's servants**] "Doubtless those whom Solomon enslaved of the Canaanites (see 1 Kings ix. 20, 21). Their descendants were probably regarded as engrafted into Israel, as were the Gibeonites."—*Orosby.* **70.**] "With verse 69 the register ends, and the thread of Nehemiah's history is resumed. He was the Tirshatha or governor, and the liberality displayed by him and some of the leading men for the suitable equipment of the ministers of religion forms the subject of the remaining portion of the chapter. Their donations consisted principally in garments. In the East a present of garments, or of any article of use, is conformable to the prevailing sentiments and customs of society." **Drams of gold**] *i. e. darics.* A daric was a gold coin of ancient Persia, worth £1 5*s*. **71. Pound of silver**] i. e. *mina* (sixty shekels, or £9). **73. So . . . all Israel dwelt in their cities**] "The utility of these genealogical registers was thus found in guiding to a knowledge of the cities and localities in each tribe to which every family anciently belonged."—*Jamieson.*

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—3. Finished Work.
" 2. The Best Testimonial
" 4. The Spaciousness and Emptiness of the City of God.
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" 70—72. The Enthusiasm of Generosity.
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Finished Work.

vii. 1—3. *Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.*

The narrative has traced the progress of the work—its inception, its difficulties, its opponents; now the last stone has been lifted into its place, and Nehemiah looks upon his *finished work.* This is fitting; it is beautiful, but withal uncommon. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." And the evening fell upon *a finished world.* "Father, the hour is come. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And when the darkness at the crucifixion rolled away, the sun looked upon *a finished redemption.* Of John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle it is written, they "finished their course," as if there were no incompleteness of character or tasks left undone. Uncommon!

I. **Every man has some work to do.** It is well surely, it is needful certainly,

that we be reminded that *business* is a sacred thing, and that *duty* is a bow set in the firmament that is above every one of us. Right and wrong are not theological terms to be accurately defined in Christian pulpits, and spasmodically sought on holy days. The word *work* has all but infinite meanings. It was fitting that the man who perhaps more than any other in our country has taught the sacredness of work should have a medal struck in his honour when he reached the patriarchal age of eighty. That in us which is best and truest says that the man whom we delight to honour is he who can widen our conception of duty, who can cherish in us the faith that this is God's world, not the devil's world, and that life is more important than death. To live in this spirit is no child's play. A merchant who strives to conduct a large business on Christian principles, who endeavours to divest himself of the prejudices of habit and the customs of those around him, will soon discover that the commonplace "honesty is the best policy" is not true in the first and most obvious interpretation which is put upon it. Let any one of us try to take up the petty details of each day's work and ennoble them by the spirit in which they are done, and it shall not be easy. But be it remembered that, after all, the formation of his character is a man's true work. Every work should bear relation to the one indispensable thing, "meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

II. Few men leave their tasks complete. Finished work—that suggests unfinished work. Nehemiah, the rebuilder of Jerusalem, reminds us of David, the projector of Jerusalem. There is much of human feeling in those words of David in which he refers to his *unpermitted purpose.* Shortly before his death—at that period of life when men become prophetic—he assembled the chiefs of the people, and said, "I had in mine heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, *and had made ready for the building:* but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name. Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts" (1 Chron. xxviii.). *Much work is planned but never executed; more is begun which is not completed.* There were brave men before Agamemnon, only no poet arose to sing their deeds. He who, sitting in the hull of some forest tree, first struck out upon the sea was one of the bravest men who ever lived, but his name those who heard it have not transmitted. Yet the art of ship-building had its birth in that man's brain. There is an element of sadness in the fact that David only gathered the materials to build the temple. The idea of that temple floated in his mind, lay concealed there; grew slowly, as all great things grow. Even the pattern was partly conceived. Nothing was wanting but a Divine permission, and that was withheld. David was happy in that the work was entrusted to his son Solomon. For that man is honoured who conceives a noble project, and sees his children rise up to carry it out. When in this best and truest sense is fulfilled the old promise that after the fathers shall come up the children, it is well. Such a man may well take a farewell of the world, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Perhaps that man is happier who, like Nehemiah, lives to complete his own work. One hardly knows. Of one thing we may be certain—this is the exception, the other is the rule. There are few cemeteries in which you will not find a broken column; broken not by accident, or stress of weather, but by the sculptor's hammer, to indicate that the life of him who sleeps beneath was snapped asunder, his purposes suddenly hindered. As, however, God does not work without a purpose and a plan, there must be, there is, a meaning in this. The world is a huge clock-work. Each man is a part of and necessary to the whole. The individual is insignificant. His work is partial. Division of labour is necessary. One man's skill needful to all men's well-being. One country has what another lacks. Life is a series of beginnings. A human life is little more than a beginning. Threescore years and ten are too few in which to accomplish much. "No day without a line" was a motto of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Most men might imitate a famous

carver, who when he exhibited his work wrote underneath, "Lysippus has something more to add to this." In the artist's mind the picture is perfect, on his canvas the picture is incomplete. It is only in a relative sense, only with mental reserve and understood apology, that any man can say of himself, "I have finished the work." The story of our *joint work* is pictured in the history of our cathedrals. Norman barons, pious queens, monks of a long-forgotten age, and bishops of to-day have prayed and begged, toiled and given, to make them what they are. This is the conclusion of the whole matter. We work for eternity. We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were.

III. **He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.** His work may not abide. Nehemiah's did. A builder's work is lasting. All necessary work is not. The eloquence of Chalmers will one day be only a memory; the bridges of Brunel and Stephenson will tell their tale to many generations. But the influence of Chalmers will abide. Your task may not be permanent; it has in it some permanent element. What is greater than the work? The man who does it. An invading army may destroy Nehemiah's wall, but not the memory of Nehemiah's character. The temple of David and Solomon is destroyed, but the Church has preserved their songs and copied their example in building a house for the Lord. They abide for ever. Let us do our work reliant on Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

ILLUSTRATIVE POEM:—

SOMETHING LEFT UNDONE.

"Labour with what zeal we will,
Something still remains undone,
Something uncompleted still
Waits the rising of the sun.

By the bedside, on the stair,
At the threshold, near the gates,
With its menace or its prayer,
Like a mendicant it waits;

Waits, and will not go away;
Waits, and will not be gainsaid;
By the cares of yesterday
Each to-day is heavier made;

Till at length the burden seems
Greater than our strength can bear,
Heavy as the weight of dreams,
Pressing on us everywhere.

And we stand from day to day,
Like the dwarfs of times gone by,
Who, as Northern legends say,
On their shoulders held the sky."—*Longfellow.*

THE BEST TESTIMONIAL.

vii. 2. *I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.*

The *obscure* men and women of the Bible furnish a study as interesting as it is practically inexhaustible. Who was Hanani? A brother of Nehemiah, who took a journey to Susa to visit his brethren (ch. i. 2). Who was Hananiah? Ruler of the palace at Jerusalem. No further biographic facts are discoverable. "Apelles approved in Christ" (Rom. xvi. 10). Approved in Christ; what character lies behind that commendation! But how little of the private history of Apelles can

investigation furnish. So with Paul's friends in general. *Nehemiah and Hanani.* Two brothers whose paths diverged. They started in life together: one scaled the heights until he stood on the steps to the throne; the other moved in the quiet vales of lowly life. Both retained allegiance to the God of their fathers; both maintained loyalty to conscience; and each reverenced the other. A not too common thing—a brother's testimony to a brother's virtue. For though the description of a faithful God-fearing man grammatically applies to Hananiah, it is equally applicable in fact to Hanani. He preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy. A prophet is often without honour in his own country. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." To be "sympathetic with the loads we see on others, forgetful of our own," argues no small degree of saintliness. Nehemiah honoured himself by honouring Hanani and Hananiah.

I. A true man's relation to God. "Hananiah feared God above many." Religious reverence, a fear that hath not torment, was the basis of his character. "The God of my father, the God of Abraham, and *the fear of Isaac*" was Jacob's description of his God. Old Testament "fear" melts into New Testament "faith and love." Patriarchs and prophets lived under the constraining influence of "the fear of God;" apostles and martyrs felt the sweet reasonableness of "the love of Christ." The phrase is changed, but not the substance. Life hath its centre not in self, but in God. Selfishness is the most ignoble motive of action. All true life begins with God. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ladder between the earth on which we stand and the heaven in which God dwells. Christ came not to destroy. He expounded, illumined, fulfilled the descriptions of religious life he found already. Do not take old-time reverence out of your holy fear of God whilst you infuse into it more of the warmth of love and trust. Our God is more fully revealed to us; but their God is our God for ever. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," urges the Psalmist; "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," counsels the Apostle.

II. A true man's relation to his fellows. "Hananiah, a faithful man." Firm, stable, enduring; a trustworthy man. In a judge this is integrity; in a witness, truth. "Fear" and "faithfulness" are inseparable. Our modern equivalents are profession and practice, creed and conduct The path reveals the purpose, the life confirms the lip. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." Faulty conduct does not adorn a faultless creed. Notable devotion in church must be supported by noteworthy uprightness in business. If the temple of our character rests upon pillars of dishonesty, its rottenness and instability will soon appear. If the first table of commandments be written in the chancel, the second table must be suspended in the counting-house. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Only thus can you sanctify him in your lives. A Christian man ought to be able to show a bold front to the world. Let him strive ever to keep a conscience void of offence toward men as well as toward God. If the laws of trade are not compatible with the laws of God, so much the worse for the laws of trade. You may bend if you will, but alas if you cringe because you must! You must forgive your enemies, you must not fear them. Men of the world seal the lips of (so-called) Christian men when these show inconsistencies in life. Would you reprove sin? Then your daily life must rebuke it. Do you desire to maintain the character of a God-fearing man? The penalty you must pay is to deserve the character of a faithful man. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

III. A true man's reward in this world. "I gave Hananiah charge over Jerusalem." Loyalty and royalty are not far apart. Those who will rule must learn to obey. Hananiah had been "faithful over a few things," he was now to be made "ruler over many things." No vote of thanks for what he had done. No testimonial raised. Simply *higher work and more of it.* Capacity creates responsibility. Power demands performance. "To him that hath shall be given."

Application. 1. *Graduate in the school of Christ.* There is no limit to your knowledge except your power of acquirement. Do not be content with conventional standards of devotion. Obey conscience, worship duty, fear God *above many.* Thus did Hananiah. 2. *Enter the sacred hierarchy of those who look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Look for virtues in your brethren. Be not like those who, "seeing many things, observe not." Some flowers grow in the shade. Many men like Hanani and Hananiah are hidden until some Nehemiah discovers them. Recognize and reverence goodness wherever you find it. Say not, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Are not his mother and his sisters with us?" Thank God for what the man *is*, and aid the purpose of God by placing the man *where he should be.* Thus did Nehemiah.

ILLUSTRATION.

"'*He was a faithful man, and feared God above many.*' It is said of Obadiah that he feared the Lord greatly. Every saint fears the Lord, but every saint does not greatly fear him. Oh, there are but few Obadiahs in the world, I mean among the saints on earth. As Paul said of Timothy, 'I have none "like-minded,"' so it may be said of some concerning the fear of the Lord; they have scarce a fellow. Hananiah had got, as to the exercise of and growth in this grace, the start of many of his brethren. He 'feared God above many.' Now, then, seeing this grace admits of degrees, and is in some stronger, and in some weaker, let us be all awakened, as to other graces, so to this grace also: that like as you abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in *this* grace also."—*Bunyan.*

The Spaciousness and Emptiness of the City of God.

vii. 4. *Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.*

The spaciousness and emptiness of the city of God! This phrase suggests God's doing and man's misdoing. "With his sword and with his bow" David the warrior-king captured the city; with his wealth he endowed it; to Solomon his son he committed its keeping. Under the hand of Solomon it grew; the great of other nations came to behold its magnificence; silver was as plentiful as stone and cedar trees as numerous as sycamores: it was "the city of the great king." When Nehemiah came it was almost a silent city, as a city of the dead. "The entire number of Jews who returned in Cyrus' day to Jerusalem was small — about 50,000 out of millions. Piety, patriotism, and desire for change were three motives at work in the 50,000. But what a vast mass were unmoved by any of these motives, and were well satisfied with their exile! Some, however, like Daniel, remained from high and holy motives. The Jewish people is a *remnant.*"—*Crosby.*

I. The spaciousness of the city of God. "The Church on earth is called a *city.* How beautiful the orders, laws, and privileges thereof! God her king dwells in her; angels and ministers are her watchmen and guard; believers are her free CITIZENS, entitled to all the fulness of God; his salvation, providential preservation, and system of sacred government are her *walls* (Isa. lxii. 12). She is called a *great city* because of her extent, and the vast number of her members (Rev. xxi. 10); a *holy city* because of the holiness of her Founder, laws, ordinances, and members, and end of erection (Rev. xi. 2); and the *city of God* because he planned, built, peopled, rules, protects, and dwells in her (Heb. xii. 22)." "Heaven is represented as a *city*, a *city with twelve foundations*, a *holy city.* What glory, order, safety, and happiness are there enjoyed by the multitudes of saints! how perfect and durable their state of felicity! and all of it founded on the purchase of Christ! None but *holy* persons do ever enter it, nor is aught but *holiness* ever practised therein (Heb. xi. 10, 16)."—*Wood. The Church was made for man.* What

pages of history have been blurred and blotted in the strife to narrow the entrance; to make the Church for man a Church for men. Not from Rome only, from the east and the west, from the north and the south they have come who would limit the rights of men and monopolize the city of God. A city; a kingdom. Whose city? who is the king? "All the ends of the earth," "all nations," "sinners," these are the catchwords of Old and New Testament teaching. The works of men are contracted; the creations of God are broad, limitless. The quiet star-lit sky, how suggestive of boundless space. The all-embracing atmosphere, how emblematic of an all-seeing and all-interested Presence. Everywhere is the only limit that can be assigned to God; to every one the only limit to the offer of his great gifts. "According to his glorious riches he shall supply all your need." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" *This city is destined to grow.* The Church is blessed first inwardly and then outwardly. Religion deepened within her pale, then extension. In the history of the first Church there are the "notes" of the Church's life before the announcement of the Church's increase (Acts ii. 42—47). The Holy Ghost first fell on the assembled disciples, then there were added three thousand souls. The doctrine of justification by faith dawns upon a Luther, and a Reformation follows. The brotherhood of man arrests Wilberforce—"bows the tall soul as by wind"—and the slave-trade is doomed; its extinction is thenceforward only a question of time.

"The golden side of Heaven's great shield is faith,
The silver reason."

The gospel has an element of Divinity in the comprehensive way in which it claims *all our service* and the *service of all.* None are exempted. None are allowed to do partial fealty. "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."

II. The emptiness of the city of God. "Are there few that be saved?" Do you waive that question of curiosity? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Take heed to thyself. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought; but that we receive a full reward." Leave the future, busy thyself with the practical, pressing present. Now at any rate "few" enough are saved. In any civilized Christian city the population divides into two classes—*the churchgoing and non-churchgoing.* If all were disposed to attend Church, they could not. *Christian and heathen countries.* All are not "soldiers of Christ." What then? Despair? Nay, work, pray, wait. We see not as yet all things put under Christ. But "he must reign." And we understand *a Divine must.*

"Let the echo fly
The spacious earth around"

The Church has done much; the world needs her to do more. Success has followed missionary effort at home and abroad. A kneeling Church has risen strong in the Lord and in the power of his might to lengthen her cords, strengthen her stakes, and multiply her converts. "As Jerusalem, in Nehemiah's time, extended far on both sides, and was scantily populated, so also the city of God in all times has had space for new additions to its population. For, in truth, the rich possessions which God has prepared in his Church for mankind would only then be sufficiently turned to profit when every one called man should enjoy them, and it were itself full and sufficiently built out and all had entered in. For that God, who has made all things for himself, and for that Lord who has redeemed all, the totality alone, from which none is lost, forms a sufficiently great people."—*Schultz.* The time is coming when the nations shall stretch out their hands unto God, the kingdoms of the earth sing praises unto the Lord. Right shall be predominant when at his name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is *Lord.* The rest is vision. "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all

nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Family Traditions.

vii. 5. *And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first.*

When, in Biblical sense, we speak of a family, we may mean a household, a kindred, a division of a tribe, a nation, or the whole family of God in heaven and on earth. "The genealogies occupied an important place in Israel. They contained the certificate of Church-membership for each Israelite. They also contained the claims to official dignity that belonged to priest and Levite. The family-idea thus received a marked emphasis in God's redemptive government—an emphasis which is echoed by Malachi (Mal. iv. 6) and the angel that appeared to Zacharias (Luke i. 17). The appearance of the Nethinim in the genealogies is a forcible illustration of the impartial grace of God. That grace which would bring in all the Gentiles as children was foretokened by the brotherly position of the Nethinim (of Gentile blood) among the people of God—the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."—*Crosby.* The genealogy was the story of their lives from year to year.

I. The family-idea. The corrective of individualism. A natural barrier against selfishness. Father, mother, brother, sister suggest unity in diversity. Differences without disagreement. "There are the two opposite poles of masculine and feminine, which contain within them the entire of our humanity —which together, not separately, make up the whole of man. Then there are the diversities in the degrees and kinds of affection. For when we speak of family affection, we must remember that it is made up of many diversities. There is nothing more different than the love which the sister bears towards the brother, compared with that which the brother bears towards the sister. The affection which a man bears towards his father is quite distinct from that which he feels towards his mother; it is something quite different towards his sister; totally diverse, again, towards his brother. And then there are diversities of character. First the mature wisdom and stern integrity of the father; then the exuberant tenderness of the mother. And then one is brave and enthusiastic, another thoughtful, and another tender. One is remarkable for being full of rich humour; another is sad, mournful, even melancholy. Again, besides these, there are diversities of condition in life. First, there is the heir, sustaining the name and honour of the family; then, perchance, the soldier, in whose career all the anxiety and solicitude of the family is centred; then the man of business, to whom they look up, trusting his advice, expecting his counsel; lastly, perhaps, there is the invalid, from the very cradle trembling between life and death, drawing out all the sympathies and anxieties of each member of the family, and so uniting them all more closely from their having one common point of sympathy and solicitude."—*F. W. Robertson.* "Of all the mysteries in the universe, I hardly know of any which is more wonderful than the kind of relationship existing between all of us and our parents. The universal consent of mankind sustains the authority of my conscience, and declares that I—I alone—must be held responsible for whatever evil I commit, and that I am to be praised if I do well. And yet nothing can be plainer than that it is easy or difficult for me to do well, according as

my father and my mother, my grandfather and my grandmother, and I know not how far back I may go, were, or were not, temperate, virtuous, upright, good people. As there is this singular and most mysterious relationship between my moral life and the moral life of my parents, there is a relationship equally intimate between my physical and intellectual life and theirs. My voice, the length and shape of my limbs, my height, the colour of my hair, the strength and clearness of my sight, the soundness of my brain, my muscular vigour, whatever constitutes my weakness or my power, was largely determined for me by what my parents were."—*R. W. Dale.* The mysteries of life are not so much abroad as at home. The miracle is not in some seldom, far-off event, but in life's daily scenes—noon and night, birth and death, the daily bread, the nightly guardianship. Home, family, a sacred centre, a heaven-made bond.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart, untravelled, fondly turns to thee."

II. **Family history.** We are heirs of all the yesterdays. An unpayable debt owed to the past. The poets describe virtues more to be valued than "Norman blood." Men prize "Norman blood" notwithstanding. The Jew, "the pilgrim of commerce," turned homeward with a peculiar ardour of affection. The chosen people. All others Gentiles. Cosmopolitanism a modern idea. "My name and the name of my fathers." Jacob. "My fathers' God." Moses. "I am not better than my fathers." Elijah. "I am a sojourner as all my fathers were." David. "O thou God of my fathers." Daniel. "I worship the God of my fathers." Paul. The thought which the dying Wesley phrased ran through Hebrew history as a "family tradition"—"*The best of all is, God is with us.*" Their familiar description of God was "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." The "family tradition" that links us with some event in history is good; the "family tradition" that tells of deeds of heroism and acts of unselfishness is better. Not who we are, but what we are, the pre-eminent consideration.

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies."

The idea of the family is unity; the history of the family suggests continuance. "No separation can ever break that fellowship of common love which exists in a home. Its members may be sundered by unknown seas, yet the bands of a common affection and sympathy unite them still. So is the fellowship of the Christian brotherhood unbroken by death. It extends to heaven, and unites it with earth—the whole family in heaven and earth named in Christ."—*E. L. Hull. There is no past.* The ages are inseparably linked together. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." So it shall be with us. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light. We shall stand in the presence of those who were dead, but are alive again and live for evermore. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The dead will not return to us, but we shall go to them.

The Enthusiasm of Generosity.

vii. 70—72. *And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver. And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments.*

This scene reminds us of two similar ones in Hebrew history. Shortly before his death David the king gathered the people together, and by his example and

entreaty caused the princes and people to offer willingly (1 Chron. xxix.). Even the abundance of the offerings is less marked than the willing spirit of the offerers. "I know, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee." Joash gave order to repair the temple with "all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord." "And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. And they gathered money in abundance" (2 Kings xii.; 2 Chron. xxiv.). The *Jew* and the *Friend* have received honourable mention for their generosity to the poor of their confraternity. The *Jew* has distinguished himself in his devotion to his temple. The pilgrim of commerce has cast some of his commercial gains into the treasury of God.

I. Claimants. The cause of God is the cause of humanity. The Church a republican institution. "The rich and poor meet together." "The poor shall never cease out of the land." "The poor ye have always with you." Moses and Jesus, Old Testament and New, recognize what they do not explain—poverty. The Communion Service takes special cognizance of the poor. The offertory sentences cite the golden rule, the laws of analogy, the behests of God. It is fitting, it is beautiful that at the feast of love, love should take shape and colour, that a body should be prepared for it. "All ye are brethren." How far-reaching are these simple sayings of Jesus Christ. The cause of God—let not that well-known phrase lose its sharpness by use and familiarity. The cause of God is the cause of righteousness, the cause of the weak and oppressed, the cause of the widow and orphan, the cause of the slave and aboriginal, the cause of those who in every clime sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

II. The generous spirit. Motive decides action. "The true measure of sacrifice is not the greatness of the outward act, but the perfectness of the inward motive. We like to do a thing which *seems* to be a great dedication and which flatters our self-love by its greatness, partly because it is far easier to do a great thing which does not necessitate self-surrender, than a small thing that does. It is the all—*the very heart* of the man—that God asks for; the outward form of the sacrifice is of little worth. It is not the great outward act, but the perfect yielding of the soul, which constitutes the sacrifice which God will not despise."—*E. L. Hull.* "The motive and measure." How much shall I give to God? A tithe? "Am I a Jew?" Is the world still in its cradle? Is Christianity a set of rules or a great principle? *How much owest thou unto thy Lord?* "Freely ye have received, freely give." Do not ask, "How little can I give?" Inquire rather how much thou hast received. "In the light of the judgment day" it will be well to be "blameless as the steward of God." When the omniscient Searcher of all hearts pronounces his verdict, blessed will be the man whom he describes as "that faithful and wise steward." Hold your possessions in trust. When need arises and ability be given, cast your uncounted coins into the treasury. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "Not getting, but giving, is the way to wealth."

ILLUSTRATIVE POEM:—

"Abon Ben Adhem—may his tribe increase!—
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw amid the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel writing in a book of gold:
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the vision in the room he said,

'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
And with a voice made of all sweet accord,
Replied, 'The names of them that love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abon. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the Angel. Abon spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.'
The Angel wrote and vanished. The next night
He came again with a great wakening light;
He showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And, lo, Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

Leigh Hunt.

Toilers Resting.

vii. 73. *So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.*

Wall built. Reformations about to begin. A breathing-time.

I. **Rest after labour.** The great human heart of Jesus speaks in Mark vi. 31: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." More dramatic when we see him weeping tears of friendship by the grave of Lazarus, or tears of regret over the city of Jerusalem. But not more human than this anxiety for his disciples. The people needed teaching and healing, but the disciples needed rest. The circumstances were these. They had been through the cities preaching and healing. Returning to their Lord, "they told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught." He orders them to cross the lake and be beyond the tide of human population. After the miracle of feeding he himself "departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, he was alone." Putting side by side his precept and example, we have his recorded convictions on the necessity and importance of leisure and loneliness — the needs-be for rest. Body and mind require it. Rest and sleep are Nature's great restorers. Never more than in this day. "One great danger in our time is that every man is so active; every man has so much to think about and to do. Nothing moves slowly. If we had the refashioning of the year, we would make it twenty-four months. If we had the refashioning of the day, we would make it forty-eight hours. If we had our own refashioning, we would kindle in ourselves a fire that would burn forty-eight hours without replenishing. Intensity of life, over-wrought occupation comes from the very social, political, and commercial conditions in which we live. And, as if this were not enough, we try, by strong stimulus, to wind up the flagging nerve, worn out by too much excitement. We want, in that way, to make twelve hours do the work of twenty-four."—*H. W. Beecher.* One of the penalties we pay for high civilization. The too common history of men in relation to whom work has induced insanity and insanity suicide. Earlier rest would have ministered to many a man's mind in the incipient stages of disease. Moral development retarded by the whirl of business; by the incessant anxiety to make both ends meet. "The cares of this world" and "the deceitfulness of riches" are both harmful. All a Christian's time must not be devoted to others. The sanctuary is necessary. Labour is commendable. But leisure is invaluable. Leisure to remind ourselves that we are immortal, that there is a God for us; leisure for personal examination, contrite confession, private prayer, inward resolve; leisure for physical renewal, mental culture, spiritual advancement. "In these hours of rest and retirement many gentle qualities will spring up which find no place in life; only as flowers and grass find place on a pavement, growing up between the stones. There is many a man whose ordinary life is hard as a stone, and whose taste or culture shows itself only as it steals out through the joints where stone meets stone. It is a piteous thing that men should be so hard; and the habit of being by one's self, the habit of rest and inspection, gives some opportunity for the develop

ment of the finer traits of character, which, after all, go far toward making the beauty of holiness in man spring up and bear appropriate fruit."—*H. W. Beecher.*

II. Rest before labour. Rest not an end, but a means to an end. The corrective and reward of toil. The true reward of anything consists in having done it more than in its consequences or in men's appreciation of it. All who labour may enjoy the earthly paradise of rest. But only when it is the preparation for renewed toil. The life of leisure which some sigh for is not desirable. None more wretched than those who have nothing to do. Work was not imposed as a curse. God put the first man into paradise "to dress it and to keep it." It is expressly noted that "there was not a man to till the ground." Work is as old as the creation. Noble too. God imposed it. The curse consisted in *the toil and its fruitlessness.* "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." The naturalness of work is seen in the recurrence of day and night. Weary we lie down to rest. Sleep recruits the wasted energies of body; the mind recuperates itself. The morning calls us forth to labour. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." All work and no play is a curse indeed. All play and no work is not a blessing. "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." So Christ spake. And he gives three reasons for this. It is the accomplishment of his Father's purpose. "He sent me." It is in imitation of his Father. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The opportunity for work will soon be past. "The night cometh, when no man can work." Speaking of his disciples to the end of time, he said, "As the Father sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." "Labourers together with God" is our appellation. Rest is for a while; work is for life. We find Christ in the city, in the temple, in all the haunts of men. But he soon leaves. His choice seems to be where Nature can speak to him—on the mountain, in the desert, by the sea. He is grander there than when compelled to battle with prejudices. He drank at the pure fount of Nature. So must we. Amongst men we get dwarfed, discontented, disgusted. Meanness, selfishness, the grinding of the weak by the strong, the lip profession belied by the life—all this shakes our faith in goodness. No man can always live in a crowd. We are led by popular opinion, deceived by glitter and show. We shall be superficial in much the same proportion as we neglect solitary converse with ourselves. Too much looking within may be dangerous. That danger is remote. Our danger lies in being strangers to ourselves—looking upward, outward, and onward, but not inward. It is sometimes good for a man to be alone. Some experiences only come to us in solitude. We shall die alone. Friends may smooth our pillow and soothe our pain by their tender ministries of affection; but in the depths of the soul we shall be alone. To every one death is an undiscovered land. Alone in death we must be. And yet not alone. "The Father is with me." Beyond, the labour that does not fatigue, the service that is perfect freedom. "They serve him day and night in his temple." "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER VII.

Cities.

The classification of the human race into dwellers in towns and nomade wanderers (Gen. iv. 20, 22) seems to be intimated by the etymological sense

of the Hebrew words *Ar* or *Ir*, and *Kirjath*, viz., as places of security against an enemy, distinguished from the unwalled village or hamlet, whose resistance is more easily overcome by the marauding tribes of the desert. This distinction is found actually existing in countries, as Persia and Arabia, in which the tent-dwellers are found, like the Rechabites, almost side by side with the dwellers in cities, sometimes even sojourning within them, but not amalgamated with the inhabitants, and in general making the desert their home, and, unlike the Rechabites, robbery their undissembled occupation. The earliest notice in Scripture of city-building is of Enoch by Cain, in the land of his "exile" (Gen. iv. 17). After the confusion of tongues, the descendants of Nimrod founded Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar; and Asshur, a branch from the same stock, built Nineveh, Rehoboth-by-the-river, Calah, and Resen, the last being "a great city." A subsequent passage mentions Sidon, Gaza, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Lasha as cities of the Canaanites, but without implying for them antiquity equal to that of Nineveh and the rest (Gen. x. 10—12, 19; xi. 3, 9; xxxvi. 37). Cities existed in Syria prior to the time of Abraham, who himself came from "Ur," the "city" of the Chaldæans. The earliest description of a city, properly so called, is that of Sodom (Gen. xix. 1—22); but it is certain that from very early times cities existed on the sites of Jerusalem, Hebron, and Damascus. The last, said to be the oldest city in the world, must, from its unrivalled situation, have always commanded a congregated population. Hebron is said to have been built seven years before Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt, and is thus the only Syrian town which presents the elements of a date for its foundation. Even before the time of Abraham there were cities in Egypt (Gen. xii. 14, 15; Num. xiii. 22). The Israelites, during their sojourn there, were employed in building or fortifying the "treasure cities" of Pithom and Raamses; but their pastoral habits make it unlikely that they should build, still less fortify, cities of their own in Goshen. Meanwhile the settled inhabitants of Syria on both sides of the Jordan had grown in power and in number of "fenced cities." In the kingdom of Sihon are many names of cities preserved to the present day; and in the kingdom of Og, in Bashan, were sixty "great cities" with walls and brazen bars, besides unwalled villages; and also twenty-three cities in Gilead, which were occupied and perhaps partly rebuilt or fortified by the tribes on the east of Jordan. On the west of Jordan, whilst thirty-one "royal" cities are enumerated (Josh. xii.) in the district assigned to Judah, one hundred and twenty-five cities with villages are reckoned. But from some of these the possessors were not expelled till a late period, and Jerusalem itself was not captured till the time of David (2 Sam. v. 6—9). From this time the Hebrews became a city-dwelling and agricultural rather than a pastoral people. David enlarged Jerusalem, and Solomon, besides embellishing his capital, also built or rebuilt Tadmor, Palmyra, Gezer, Beth-horon, Hazor, and Megiddo, besides store-cities. Collections of houses in Syria for social habitation may be classed under three heads: (1) cities, (2) towns with citadels or towers for resort and defence, (3) unwalled villages. The cities may be assumed to have been in almost all cases "fenced cities," *i. e.* possessing a wall with towers and gates; and that as a mark of conquest was to break down a portion, at least, of the city wall of the captured place, so the first care of the defenders, as of the Jews after their return from captivity, was to rebuild the fortifications. But around the city, especially in peaceable times, lay undefended suburbs, to which the privileges of the city extended. The city thus became the citadel, while the population overflowed into the suburbs. The absence of walls, as indicating security in peaceable times, combined with populousness, as was the case in the flourishing period of Egypt, is illustrated by the prophet Zechariah (ii. 4). According to Eastern custom,

special cities were appointed to furnish special supplies for the service of the state: cities of store, for chariots, for horsemen, for building purposes, for provision for the royal table. Special governors for these and their surrounding districts were appointed by David and by Solomon. To this practice our Lord alludes in his parable of the pounds, and it agrees with the theory of Hindoo government, which was to be conducted by lords of single townships, of 10, 100, or 1000 towns. To the Levites cities were assigned, distributed throughout the country, together with a certain amount of suburban ground, and out of these thirteen were specially reserved for the family of Aaron. The internal government of Jewish cities was vested before the captivity in a council of elders with judges, who were required to be priests: Josephus says seven judges with two Levites as officers. Under the kings a president or governor appears to have been appointed, and judges were sent out on circuit, who referred matters of doubt to a council composed of priests, Levites, and elders at Jerusalem. After the captivity Ezra made similar arrangements for the appointment of judges. In the time of Josephus there appear to have been councils in the provincial towns, with presidents in each, under the directions of the great council at Jerusalem. In many Eastern cities much space is occupied by gardens, and thus the size of the city is much increased. The vast extent of Nineveh and Babylon may thus be in part accounted for. In most Oriental cities the streets are extremely narrow. It seems likely that the immense concourse which resorted to Jerusalem at the feasts would induce wider streets than in other cities. Herod built in Antioch a wide street paved with stone, and having covered ways on each side. Agrippa II. paved Jerusalem with white stone. The straight street of Damascus is still clearly defined and recognizable. We cannot determine whether the internal commerce of Jewish cities was carried on as now, by means of bazaars, but we read of the bakers' street (Jer. xxxvii. 21), and Josephus speaks of the wool market, the hardware market, a place of blacksmiths' shops, and the clothes market at Jerusalem. The open spaces near the gates of towns were in ancient times, as they are still, used as places of assembly by the elders, of holding courts by kings and judges, and of general resort by citizens. They were also used as places of public exposure by way of punishment. Prisons were under the kingly government within the royal precinct. Great pains were taken to supply both Jerusalem and other cities with water, both by tanks and cisterns for rain-water, and by reservoirs supplied by aqueducts from distant springs. Such was the fountain of Gihon, the aqueduct of Hezekiah, and of Solomon, of which last water is still conveyed from near Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Josephus also mentions an attempt made by Pilate to bring water to Jerusalem. Burial-places, except in special cases, were outside the city.—*Rev. H. W. Phillott, M.A.*, in '*Smith's Bible Dictionary*'

GENEALOGIES.

Genealogy, literally the act or art of the γενεαλόγος, *i. e.* of him who treats of birth and family, and reckons descents and generations. Hence by an easy transition it is often (like ἱστορια) used of the document itself in which such series of generations is set down. In Hebrew the term for a genealogy or pedigree is "the book of the generations;" and because the oldest histories were usually drawn up on a genealogical basis, the expression often extended to the whole history, as is the case with the Gospel of St. Matthew, where "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" includes the whole history contained in that Gospel. So Gen. ii. 4, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth," seems to be the title of the history which follows. Gen. v. 1, vi. 9; x. 1; xi. 10, 27; xxv. 12, 19, xxxvi. 1, 9; xxxvii. 2, are other ex

amples of the same usage, and these passages seem to mark the existence of separate histories from which the book of Genesis was compiled. Nor is this genealogical form of history peculiar to the Hebrews, or the Semitic races. The earliest Greek histories were also genealogies . . . . The frequent use of the patronymic in Greek, the stories of particular races, the lists of priests, and kings, and conquerors at the games preserved at Sparta, Olympia, and elsewhere; the hereditary monarchies and priesthoods; the division, as old as Homer, into tribes, fratriæ, and γένη, and the existence of the *tribe*, the *gens*, and the *familia* among the Romans; the Celtic clans, the Saxon families using a common patronymic, and their royal genealogies running back to the Teutonic gods, these are among the many instances that may be cited to prove the strong family and genealogical instinct of the ancient world. Coming nearer to the Israelites, it will be enough to allude to the hereditary principle and the vast genealogical records of the Egyptians as regards their kings and priests, and to the passion for genealogies among the Arabs, mentioned by Layard and others, in order to show that the attention paid by the Jews to genealogies is in entire accordance with the manners and tendencies of their contemporaries. In their case, however, it was heightened by several peculiar circumstances. The promise of the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob successively, and the separation of the Israelites from the Gentile world; the expectation of Messiah as to spring from the tribe of Judah; the exclusively hereditary priesthood of Aaron with its dignity and emoluments; the long succession of kings in the line of David; and the whole division and occupation of the land upon genealogical principles by the tribes, families, and houses of fathers, gave a deeper importance to the science of genealogy among the Jews than perhaps any other nation. We have already noted the evidence of the existence of family memoirs even before the Flood, to which we are probably indebted for the genealogies in Gen. iv. 5; and Gen. x., xi., &c. indicate the continuance of the same system in the times between the Flood and Abraham. But with Jacob, the founder of the nation, the system of reckoning by genealogies was much further developed . . . . According to these genealogical divisions the Israelites pitched their tents and marched, and offered their gifts and offerings, and chose the spies. According to the same they cast the lots by which the troubler of Israel, Achan, was discovered, as later those by which Saul was called to the throne. Above all, according to these divisions the whole land of Canaan was parcelled out amongst them. But now of necessity that took place which always has taken place with respect to such genealogical arrangements, viz., that by marriage, or servitude, or incorporation as friends and allies, persons not strictly belonging by birth to such or such a family or tribe were yet reckoned in the census as belonging to them. The tribe of Levi was probably the only one which had no admixture of foreign blood. In many of the Scripture genealogies, as, *e.g.*, those of Caleb, Joab, Segub, and the sons of Rephaiah, &c., in 1 Chron. iii. 21, it is quite clear that birth was not the ground of their incorporation into their respective tribes. However, birth was, and continued to be throughout their whole national course, the *foundation* of all the Jewish organization, and the reigns of the more active kings and rulers were marked by attention to genealogical operations. . . . . But, however tradition may have preserved for a while true genealogies, or imagination and pride have coined fictitious ones, after the destruction of Jerusalem it may be safely affirmed that the Jewish genealogical system then came to an end. Just notions of the nature of the Jewish genealogical records are of great importance with a view to the right interpretation of Scripture. Let it only be remembered that these records have respect to political and territorial divisions, as much as to strictly genealogical descent, and it will at once be seen how erroneous a conclusion it may be that all who are called "sons" of

such or such a patriarch, or chief father, must necessarily be his very children. . . . The sequence of generations may represent the succession to such or such an inheritance or headship of tribe or family, rather than the relationship of father and son . . . As regards the chronological use of the Scripture genealogies, great caution is necessary in using them as measures of time. What seems necessary to make them trustworthy measures of time is, either that they should have special internal marks of being complete, such as where the mother as well as the father is named, or some historical circumstance defines the several relationships, or that there should be several genealogies, all giving the same number of generations within the same termini. As an indication of the carefulness with which the Jews kept their pedigrees, it is worth while to notice the recurrence of the same name, or modifications of the same name, such as Tobias, Tobit, Nathan, Mattatha, and even of names of the same signification, in the same family. The Jewish genealogies have two forms, one giving the generations in a descending, the other in an ascending scale. Females are named when there is anything remarkable about them, or when any right or property is transmitted through them. The genealogical lists of names are peculiarly liable to corruptions of the text. The Bible genealogies give an unbroken descent of the house of David from the creation to the time of Christ. The registers at Jerusalem must have supplied the same to the priestly and many other families. They also inform us of the origin of most of the nations of the earth, and carry the genealogy of the Edomitish sovereigns down to about the time of Saul. Viewed as a whole, it is a genealogical collection of surpassing interest and accuracy.—*Rev. Lord A. Hervey, in 'Smith's Bible Dictionary.'*

SENTENCES FROM OLD WRITERS.

I. The wall completed (ver. 1). "Nehemiah was not vain-glorious. He was humbly lofty, and loftily humble; humble in heart, and yet high in worth and works." "Those that have a hand in building the spiritual Jerusalem shall be surely crowned and chronicled." "There must be no straining courtesy who shall begin to build, nor must men fear for their forwardness to be styled seraphical and singular." "Not priests and Levites only, but the great men in every country, yea, and the country people too, must work at God's building. Every one must be active in his own sphere; not live to himself, but help to bear the burdens of Church and commonwealth." "All God's work is honourable." "Let us learn at these good men's examples to be bold and constant in well-doing, and not to fear every brag and blast of wind. Let us be as a lusty horse, that goeth through the street, and careth not for the barking of every cur that leapeth forth as though he would bite him; so let us not be afraid of the barking curs, nor look backward, but go on forth, not changing with every tide, and the mighty Lord will strengthen our weakness with good success to finish his building; for so have all good men done from the beginning."

II. Hanani and Hananiah (ver. 2). "Hanani was a gracious man according to his name, and zealous for his country, which indeed is a man's self." "An honest man of good credit, and more earnest in religion and love to his country than others, because his name is put down in writing, and the others are not." "Hananiah was a man of truth, faithfulness, or firmness; a sure man, and such as one might safely confide in." "He feared God. No wonder, therefore, that he was faithful to men. God's holy fear is the ground of all goodness and fidelity. Hence Jethro, in his well-qualified ruler, places the fear of God in the midst of the other graces, as the heart in the body, for conveying life to all the parts, or as a dram of musk, perfuming the whole box of ointment (Exod. xviii. 21)." "Nothing maketh a man so good a patriot as

the true fear of God." "Take away piety, and fidelity is gone." "He cannot be faithful to me (said a king) that is unfaithful to God." "Religion is the foundation of all true fidelity and loyalty to king and country. Hence that close connection, Fear God, honour the king (1 Pet. ii. 17)." "Hananiah feared God above many. This is a singular praise, and by every man to be sought after, to be eminent and exemplary, taller than the rest by the head and shoulders, full of all goodness, filled with all knowledge (Rom. xv. 14), able and active in every good word and work." "That is a low and unworthy strain in some, to labour after no more grace than will keep life and soul together, that is, soul and hell asunder." "God would have his people to be discontentedly contented with the measures they have received, and to be still adding (2 Pet. i. 5) and advancing (Phil. iii. 14), aspiring to perfection, till they come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. iv. 13)."

III. The city guard (ver. 3). "Set thou watches. He speaketh to the two Hananis, and bids each of them, whose turn it was, see to the well-doing of it. Xenophon saith of Cyrus, that when he gave anything in command he never said, 'Let some one do this,' but, 'Do thou this.'"

IV. An inspired man (ver. 5). "No man ever grew to be greatly good without a Divine instinct." "Every good motion in him, and whatever he thought of that was conducive to the good and welfare of Jerusalem, Nehemiah always ascribed it to God."

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] **1. Street**] Rather "square." **An open place at the gate of Oriental** cities where trials were held and wares set forth for sale.—*Gesenius.* **The water gate**] See addenda to chap. iii. **They spake unto Ezra**] "The assembled people. This reading, then, was desired by the assembly. The motive for this request is to be found in the desire of the congregation to keep the new moon of the seventh month as a feast of thanksgiving for the gracious assistance they had received from the Lord during the building of the wall, and through which it had been speedily and successfully completed, in spite of the attempts of their enemies to obstruct the work. This feeling of thankfulness impelled them to the hearing of the word of God for the purpose of making his law the rule of their life."—*Keil.* **Ezra the scribe**] "In the next verse it is Ezra the priest. This is the first mention of Ezra in the book of Nehemiah. He had come to Jerusalem thirteen years previously. He had forced the Jews to separate from their heathen wives, and had then probably returned to Persia. As we do not meet with his name in Nehemiah till now, it is probable he followed Nehemiah to Judæa to assist him in another movement of reform."—*Crosby.* **2. All that could hear with understanding**] Men, women, and elder children. **The first day of the seventh month**] Distinguished above the other new moon's of the year as the feast of trumpets, and celebrated as a specially sacred festival (Lev. xxiii. 23—25; Num. xxix. 1—6). **3. From the morning**] "From the light till mid-day." About six hours. **4. Pulpit**] A very high platform. **Beside him stood Mattithiah, &c.**] Probably priest. "Perhaps Urijah is the father of the Meremoth of iii. 4, 21; Maaseiah, the father of the Azariah of iii. 23; Pedaiah, the individual named iii. 21; the Azariah to be inserted, according to 1 Esdras, the same named iii. 23; a Meshullam occurs, iii. 4, 6; and a Malchiah, iii. 11, 14, 31."—*Bertheau.* **6. Ezra blessed the Lord**] Perhaps with a sentence of thanksgiving, as David did (1 Chron. xxix. 10). **7. Also Jeshua, &c. caused the people to understand**] "To instruct by expounding."—*Keil.* **8. So they read, &c.**] *The Rabbis* understand it to be a paraphrase in the Chaldee language for those who were not acquainted with the ancient Hebrew. *Others*, exposition and application. "Perhaps Ezra first read a section of the law, and the Levites then expounded to the people the portion just read; the only point still doubtful being whether the Levites expounded in succession, or whether they all did this at the same time to different groups of people.'—*Keil.* **10. Send portions**] See Deut. xvi. 11, 12; Esther ix. 19, 22. **14, 15.**] The law concerning the feast of the tabernacles, of which the essentials are here communicated, is found Lev. xxiii. 39—43. **17. Since the days of**

Jeshua . . . . had not the children of Israel done so] The emphasis is on *so*. The feast of tabernacles had often been observed, but not in such a way as on this occasion, when the whole community dwelt in booths. **18. Also day by day]** The law enjoined such a public reading once in seven years at the feast of tabernacles (Deut. xxxi. 10, 11).

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER VIII.

Ver.	4—8. The Church's Common Service a Primitive and Reasonable Service.	Ver.	10. The Joy of the Lord.
,,	5, 6. Effect of Ezra's Preaching.	,,	10. The Joy of the Lord is our Strength.
,,	9. Ezra Reading the Law.	,,	10. On Religious Joy, as giving Strength and Support to Virtue.
,,	10. The Christian in his Spiritual Joys.	,,	18. Daily Bible Reading.

The Church's Common Service a Primitive and Reasonable Service.

viii. 4—8. *And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood*, &c.

We might search long among the different histories of the world before we should find a scene more impressive and affecting than that which is here represented. A whole people recently re-established by God's mercy in their own country, from which for their sins they had been long banished; assembled together to hear the solemn reading and exposition of their Divinely-inspired law, now about to be revived amongst them; and bowing down in lowly adoration of the Lord, the great God, from whom they had received it. So arduous and laborious an enterprise as the resettling of a people in full possession of their own land, and in the complete enjoyment of their several religious, social, and domestic relations, was necessarily a work of time. Many obstacles were raised to it by the malicious opposition of enemies from without, and many interruptions occurred from a want of spirit and energy within. The work gradually proceeded. Under the directions of Zerubbabel, then of Ezra, and lastly Nehemiah, the people had the satisfaction of contributing to the restoration of their dwellings, of their altars, of their temple, and finally of the gates and walls of their city. But another want remained to be supplied. The knowledge of their sacred Scriptures had been almost totally lost among the Jews. Together, therefore, with anxiety and diligence in restoring their material buildings, Ezra, who is recorded to have been "a ready scribe in the law of Moses," combined an equal degree of care and industry in restoring the Holy Scriptures.

I. **First, then, the reading of the Holy Scriptures thus publicly for the instruction of the people became, from the time of Ezra, a constant practice in the Jewish synagogues.** The practice was continued in our Saviour's days, and those of his apostles. "Moses of old time," &c. (Acts xv. 21). And together with the reading of Moses was united that of the prophets (Acts xiii. 15, 27). The *propriety* of this practice might be inferred from our Lord's custom (Luke iv. 16). The *utility* of the practice may be inferred from the fact, that to this practice has been attributed the preservation of the Jewish people from the idolatrous usages of the neighbouring nations. The practice thus observed in the Jewish Church was continued in the Early Christian. Apparently recognized by St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16). "On the day" (saith Justin Martyr) "which is called Sunday there is an assembly of all those who live either in the cities or in the country, and those things which are written of or by the apostles, and the writings of the prophets, are read as long as time will permit." Upon this primitive practice is founded that of our apostolical Church. To the Scriptures of the Old Testament are added those of the New. The types of the law are accompanied with the antitypes of the gospel. The promises of the prophets are combined with the historical completion of them recorded by the apostles. Thus by means of the lessons, gospels, and epistles which are read in our churches much benefit accrues

to the people. Many persons cannot read the Scriptures themselves. Many who can, will not or do not read them. But no small number of these persons is drawn together to attend the public service of the congregation. And although they may not have the alacrity of the people spoken of here, who "gathered themselves together as one man," and "spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses," yet, when the book of God is brought, they can hardly fail of hearing some portion of its contents, and acquiring some knowledge of the truths which it reveals or records, and the duties which it teaches and inculcates. Not that any man who is able to attain more knowledge of the Scriptures ought to be contented with this. He ought not only to hear, but read, search, search daily—so to study the Holy Scriptures as to know them (John v. 39; Acts xvii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 15).

II. The reading of the law was the express object of the assembly. The manner, however, in which this business was undertaken is well worthy o our regard. "And Ezra opened," &c. (vers. 5, 6). Here is the union which subsists between the reading of the Scriptures to the people and the offering of adoration and thanksgiving to Almighty God. All public service implies this. We assemble and meet together to render thanks to God for the great benefits that we have received at his hands. The union between the devotions of the priest and the congregation. "Amen." Liturgical responses. In those forms of prayer which the Church hath provided we inherit the most valuable examples of Christian piety and devotion, a rich treasury of evangelical doctrine, and perpetual monuments and memorials of practical holiness.

III. Together with the reading of the law and the accompanying benedictions and adoration, a third service was combined, namely, that of expounding the law to the people. "So they read," &c. (ver. 8). One cause of difficulty may have been the change of language between the law as originally written by Moses and as now recited by Ezra. A thousand years had elapsed. Religious, political, civil, and domestic revolutions had occurred. From whatever cause, the fact is expressly stated. "The Levites caused the people to understand the law," &c. Practice continued in the service of the synagogue. Sanctioned by the presence and practice of our Lord and his apostles. "When the reader hath done" (continues Justin Martyr), "he that presides in the assembly admonishes and exhorts us to put those good things which we have heard in practice. And afterwards we rise up with one consent, and send up our prayers to God." The sermon—the exposition and application of Scriptural truth.

Application. 1. *Give a reverential attention to the word of God, as read in the public services of the congregation.* Grateful for the mercies of God, and sensible withal of their own manifold infirmities and acts of disobedience, these Jews received the word with lowly expressions of thankfulness, and tokens of humiliation and repentance. 2. *With reverential attention to the Holy Scriptures unite a constant and serious participation in the devotions of the Church.* "All the people answered, Amen, and worshipped." If you would derive benefit from God's word, you must derive it through the medium of his grace. If you would enjoy his grace, you must solicit it by prayer. 3. *Give attendance to those who are over you in the Lord, and who watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy.* It is no abridgment of your Christian liberty to give heed to those who bear God's commission to instruct you. We do not pretend to have dominion over your faith, but we would gladly be helpers of your joy. Let your feet habitually stand within the gates of the temple of God.—***Bishop Mant, abridged.***

Effect of Ezra's Preaching.

viii. 5, 6. *And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, &c.*

Though in the time of our Lord it was the custom to read the law of God in the synagogues, it does not appear to have been any regular part of the priest's office to preach unto the people. On some occasions we find persons sent through the land of Israel to make known the law; and here we behold Ezra on a pulpit of wood elevated above the people, and surrounded by an immense congregation, who had come together on purpose to hear the word of God expounded to them. Since the introduction of Christianity, the preaching of the gospel to men has been the particular office assigned to men who are set apart for that purpose; and though we must chiefly look to the apostles as our examples, and to the effects of their ministrations as the pattern of what we may expect to see amongst our auditors, yet may we profitably look back to the time of Ezra to learn from him and his ministry.

I. **In what manner the word of God should be dispensed.** The mode adopted by Ezra, namely, the expounding of Scripture, we conceive to be peculiarly worthy of imitation. It is indeed but little practised at the present day, though at the time of the Reformation it generally obtained; and it has very great advantages above the plan which has superseded it. 1. *It leads the people into a better acquaintance with the Scriptures.* The Scriptures, except as a book for children, are but little read; persons are discouraged from perusing them by an idea that they are unintelligible to common capacities. But a very little explanation would render them, for the most part, easy to be understood by all. And what an advantage would this be! The people studying the word of God at home would be abundantly better qualified to understand it when read in public; and the explanations given to them in public would enable them to study it to better purpose at home: whereas the present plan of taking only a small passage for a motto, or merely as a groundwork for some general observations, leads to an extreme neglect of the Holy Scriptures, and to a consequent ignorance of them among all classes of the community. 2. *It brings every part of the sacred records into view.* There are some who bring forward the doctrinal part of Scripture exclusively, and leave the practical part entirely out of sight; there are others who insist only on the practical parts, and leave out the doctrinal. There are some also to whom many of the doctrines contained in the sacred volume are perfectly hateful, and who never in all their lives so much as mentioned the doctrines of predestination and election but to explain them away, and to abuse the persons who maintained them. But by expounding whole books of Scripture every doctrine must be noticed in its turn, and the connection between them and our practice must be pointed out. True it is that this mode of preaching would not altogether exclude false doctrine; but it would render the establishment of errors more difficult, because the hearers would be able to judge, in some good measure, how far the true and legitimate sense of Scripture was given, and how far it was perverted. The benefit of this, therefore, cannot be too highly appreciated. 3. *It brings home truth to the conscience with more authority.* The word of man, though true, has little weight in comparison of the word of God; "*that* is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword." It is inconceivable what advantage a preacher has when he can say, "Thus saith THE LORD;" then every doctrine demands the obedience of faith, and every precept the obedience of righteousness. When told that the word which is delivered to them will judge them at the last day, the people will not dare to trifle with it, as they will with the declarations of fallible men. Were this

matter more attentively considered, we have no doubt but that more frequent appeals would be made to Scripture in our public harangues, and that the obsolete method of expounding Scripture would have at least some measure of that attention which it deserves. But, in considering the word of God as explained to the people of Jerusalem, we are more particularly led to notice—

II. **In what manner it should be heard.** Truly admirable was the conduct of the people on this occasion. Observe—1. *Their reverential awe.* When Ezra opened the book of God, all the people, in token of their reverence, stood up; and when he blessed God for giving them so rich a treasure, they "all with uplifted hands cried, Amen, Amen;" yea, they bowed their heads also, "and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." This was a deportment which became sinners in the presence of their God; they did not look to the creature, but to God, whose voice they heard, and whose authority they acknowledged, in every word that was spoken. What a contrast does this form with the manner in which the word of God is heard amongst us! How rarely do we find persons duly impressed with a sense of their obligation to God for giving them a revelation of his will! How rarely do men at this day look through the preacher unto God, and hear *God* speaking to them by the voice of his servants! Even religious people are far from attending the ministration of the word in the spirit and temper that they ought; curiosity, fondness for novelties, and attachment to some particular preacher too often supply the place of those better feelings by which men ought to be actuated in their attendance on the preached gospel. To "stand in awe of God's word," and "to tremble at it," are far more suitable emotions than those which we usually see around us. The Lord grant that our duty in this respect may be more justly estimated, and more generally performed. 2. *Their devout affections.* "When the people heard the words of the law," they all wept, as feeling that they had sinned greatly against it (ver. 9). And when they were reminded that, as the design of the present feast was to bring to their view the tender mercies of their God, and to encourage them to expect all manner of blessings at his hands, they ought rather to rejoice (vers. 10, 11), they did rejoice, insomuch that "there was very great gladness" amongst them; and they rejoiced especially on this account, that "they had understood the words that had been declared unto them" (ver. 12). Now it is in this way that we should hear the word delivered to us. When it shows us our sins, we should weep, as it were, in dust and ashes; and when it sets forth the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, we should rejoice, yea, "rejoice with joy unspeakable." We should have our hearts rightly attuned, so that we should never want a string to vibrate to every touch of God's blessed word. But may it not be said to the generality in the present day, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented"? Yes; the gospel has little more power over the affections of men than if it were "a cunningly devised fable." But we entreat you to consider, that if the law when expounded was so powerful, much more should the gospel be, since "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." 3. *Their unreserved obedience.* No sooner was it discovered that an ordinance appointed by Moses had been neglected, than they hastened to observe it, according to the strict letter of the law, and actually did observe it with greater fidelity than it had ever been observed even from the days of Joshua to that present hour (vers. 13—18). This showed that the impression made on their affections was deep and spiritual. And it is in this way that we also must improve the ministration of the word. If we attend to the gospel as we ought to do, we shall find out many things which we have neglected, and many that we have done amiss; yea, many things which are not generally noticed even among the godly will occur to our minds, and show us the defectiveness not of our obedience only,

but of the obedience of the best of men. Let us have our minds then open to conviction, and attentive to every commandment of our God. Nor let us be satisfied with paying only customary attention to his revealed will, but let us aspire after higher degrees of purity, and a more perfect conformity to the Divine image. This will serve as the best test of our sincerity, and it will show that neither have you heard in vain nor we dispensed his word in vain.—*Simeon.*

Ezra Reading the Law.

viii. 9. *And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.*

Ezra and Nehemiah amongst the neglected books of the Bible. Contain no specific prophecies of our Saviour's days nor of the nature of his kingdom. They do not immediately connect themselves with the consideration of our Saviour's ministry, and therefore we are tempted to pass them by. Yet, notwithstanding, they form part of "the whole counsel of God." Their subject-matter. The character of Nehemiah shows how Divine grace, whilst it sustains the lowly, is still the best safeguard to protect those who stand in the high places of the earth. The full and perfect patriotism of Nehemiah's character. Describe the bright contrast which it presents to the base and selfish purposes which are so often sheltered beneath that honourable name.

The people of Jerusalem mourning when they heard the words of the law. The law had not been read to the Jewish people since their return from Babylon. A large stage was erected in the most spacious street of the city, near to the water-gate. Ezra ascended to it with thirteen others of the principal elders. Ezra read the law in the Hebrew text, the Levites translated it into Chaldee. This was repeated daily during the entire festival, till they had gone through the whole law.

Observe the impression made upon the people. Their eyes were opened to the clear knowledge of those things which they had before seen only through the partial instruction of teachers in the land of captivity. Their hearts were touched with the consciousness of the great mercies which the Lord their God had wrought for them, and upon the sad return which the history of their own sins and the sins of their fathers presented. They were overwhelmed with sorrow.

The reading of the law revealed the spectacle of Jehovah's creative glory, Jehovah's avenging power, Jehovah's redeeming mercy. Patriarch, prophet, and apostle had been overwhelmed with awe at this spectacle. [Story of the past rehearsed again.] Is not *this day* holy unto the Lord our God? Are *we* not assembled to hear the words of his revealed will? And do not the characters of man's perverseness and rebellion which that revelation depicts stand out in as strong and humiliating contrast with the mercy of God *now*, as they did in the day of Jerusalem's redemption from captivity? Can we listen to the counsels of God's gracious providence unmoved? Our revelation fuller. Our redemption from a mightier oppressor. We are no longer under the law, but the gospel. Let us take heed, however, to ourselves that in so confessing that truth of Christ which has made us free we mar not the confession by abusing the freedom. We are freed from the law as a covenant; but we are not freed from the law as a rule. In preaching the law let us not put forth its terrors, in order that men may be affrighted or despair; but that they may be startled from the slumber of a false security, and fly for refuge unto Christ. "To preach the law alone" (saith Bishop Reynolds) "by itself we confess is to pervert the use of it; neither have we any power or commission

so to do, for we have our power for edification, and not for destruction. It was published as an appendant to the gospel, and so must it be preached; it was published in the hand of a Mediator, and it must be preached in the hand of a Mediator; it was published evangelically, and it must be so preached. We have commission to preach nothing but Christ, and life in him; and therefore we never preach the law but with reverence and manuduction to him."—*Rev. J. S. M. Anderson, M.A., abridged.*

The Christian in his Spiritual Joys.

viii. 10. *Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*

A sacred festival. "Go your way." They were to return home and refresh themselves. He does not forbid the delicacies which they had provided. Eat the fat, and drink the sweet. But all this was to be accompanied with two things. First, *liberality towards the destitute.* "Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." Law of Moses, gospel of Jesus inculcate this. Secondly, *with cheerfulness.* "Neither be ye sorry." Joy becomes a feast. And this joy, says Nehemiah, is as important as it is becoming; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. It will strengthen your bodily frame, and, what is more, it will renew the strength of your souls. Let us contemplate the Christian—I. In the Divinity, and, II. In the utility of his joy.

I. **The Divinity of it.** It is the *joy of the Lord.* So it is called by the Judge of all in his address at the last day. "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Now this joy enters the Christian, and as he is so contracted a vessel, he cannot contain much; but THEN he will enter the joy, and he will find it a boundless ocean. It is the joy of the Lord. 1. His in the *authority* that binds it upon us as a *duty.* "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous." 2. His in the *assurance* which holds it forth as a *privilege.* "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy." "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; in thy name shall they rejoice." 3. His in the *resemblance* it bears to his *own.* Christians are "partakers of the Divine nature." Do we feel the joy of God's salvation? He feels it too, and this salvation is called "the pleasure of the Lord." 4. His in the *subject.* The material of it, so to speak, is found in him, and in him alone. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." With him is the fountain of life. We are accepted in the beloved. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." All his relations are mine. He is my Physician, my Friend, my Shepherd, my Father. All his perfections are mine—his wisdom, his power, his mercy, and his truth. All the dispensations of his providence, all the treasures of his word are mine. All his grace, all his glory is mine. 5. His, finally, in the *production.* There may be reasons for rejoicing when yet no joy is experienced; for the mourner may be unable to lay hold of them, and appropriate them to his own use. David therefore says, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." And he prays, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant." And he acknowledges, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart."

II. **The utility of this joy.** It is efficacious because Divine. To know the force of an argument, we apply it. To know the power of an implement, we make trial of it. To ascertain the strength of a man, we compare him with others, we task him with some exertion, we judge by the difficulty of the work which he achieves, and especially by the might of opposition which he overcomes. Let us examine this joy. Let us bring it to six tests, some of them very severe ones. 1. Let us

review the Christian in his *profession* of religion. The joy of the Lord is the very strength of this profession. For in proportion as a man possesses it, he feels satisfied with his portion, he glories in his choice, he is ready to avow it. 'I am not ashamed; I know whom I have believed." "I will speak of thy testimonies." Let us observe the Christian—2. In his *concern to recommend religion* to others. Godliness must begin at home, but it can never end here. "The joy of the Lord gives us confidence in our addresses. We speak not from conjecture, or opinion, but experience. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." This also adds conviction and force to our testimony and commendation. Men see what our religion has done for us, and what it can do for them also. Will anything recommend a master more than the cheerfulness of his servants? 3. Let us view the Christian in the *discharge of his duties.* These are numerous, and extensive, and difficult. Fear chills, despondency unnerves, sorrow depresses. But hope is encouragement: joy inspires, excites, elevates. It renders our work our privilege. We not only have life, but have it more abundantly. "I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt have enlarged my heart." 4. Let us view the Christian in his *perils.* Perpetually surrounded with temptations in the world. These flatter him, and would entice him away from God. These he is to resist, steadfast in the faith. How? By constraints? By threatenings? These may indeed induce him actually to refuse the offers and allurements, but not in affection. The joy of the Lord is his strength; and without this a man will only leave the world as Lot's wife left Sodom—she left it, but her heart was still in the place. Prohibition, so far from killing desire, has a tendency to increase it. Having found the pure spring, the Christian no longer kneels to the filthy puddle. Having tasted the grapes of Eshcol, he longs no more for the leeks, and garlic, and onions of Egypt. The palace makes him forget the dung-hill. The only effectual way of separating the heart from the world is to subdue the sense of an inferior good by the enjoyment of a greater. 5. We shall see that the joy of the Lord is his strength if we view the Christian in his *sufferings.* Afflictions try religious principle. 6. This joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength in *death.* What but this *can* be his support then? God's comforts delight his soul. What says our subject in a way of practical improvement? 1. Inquire what your joy is. 2. See how greatly religion is libelled. 3. What an inducement is here to seek the Lord and his strength, to seek his face evermore. 4. Your religion is to be suspected if you are habitually destitute of joy. 5. Let this joy be a peculiar object of attention to every Christian. Let him never forget that it is his strength. 6. Some know the worth of this joy from the want rather than from the experience. Seek, immediately and earnestly, an increase of it.—*Jay, abridged.*

The Joy of the Lord.

viii. 10. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

A man does not take leave of happiness by knowing Christ. The believer has a sick-bed joy, a death-bed joy—a joy that shall depart with him out of this world, go with him to the judgment, live with him through eternity.

I. The nature of the true believer's joy. "The joy of the Lord"—a description. 1. *The Lord is its* AUTHOR. He creates it and establishes it in the hearts of his people. The joy of true believers is no mere animal sensation. Not "good spirits." Not a natural feeling, but a spiritual gift. St. Paul enumerates it among "the fruits of the Spirit," calls it "joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. i. 6). 2. *The Lord is the* SUBJECT *of this joy.* His people not only rejoice by him, but they rejoice in him—they "joy in the God of their salvation. His grace, his gifts, his glories, his perfections constitute the subject-matter of their joy." In his presence is "their fulness of joy." He is the Sun of their souls. And why? What is there belonging to their Lord

to give occasion for this joy? (1) The freeness of his great salvation. Here is a daily, hourly song for the believer. (2) The imputation of his justifying righteousness. (3) The Giver of their present privileges, and the Preparer of their future glories.

II. The effects of this joy. "Your strength." 1. Spiritual joy strengthens a man for DUTY. 2. Spiritual joy strengthens a man for SUFFERING.

Application. 1. *To the confident professor.* 2. *To the desponding penitent.* —*Roberts's Village Sermons.*

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH.

viii. 10. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

The preaching of God's word is a very ancient ordinance. In the context we have a description of the manner in which Nehemiah conducted it. These means of instruction were useful in that day. Nor are they less necessary in every place and age. People need not only reproof for what is wrong, but direction in what is right. The Jews wept bitterly at the hearing of the law; but Nehemiah corrected their sorrow as ill-timed, and exhorted them to rejoice in God, who had done so great things for them.

I. What reason we have to rejoice in the Lord. God is often said to rejoice over his people (Zeph. iii. 17). But the joy here spoken of must be understood rather of that which we feel in the recollection of God's goodness towards us. The Jews at that season had special cause for joy in God. Delivered from Babylon, they had prospered even to a miracle in their endeavours. Their sorrow, however just, was not to exclude this joy. Such reason also have all the Lord's people to rejoice in the Lord. They have experienced a redemption from sorer captivity, and been delivered by more stupendous means. Every day's preservation is, as it were, a miracle. The work of their souls is carried on in spite of enemies; yea, is expedited through the means used to defeat it. Surely, then, they should say, like the Church of old, "The Lord hath done great things for us" (Ps. cxxvi. 3). These mercies are pledges and earnests of yet richer blessings. They may well confide in so good and gracious a God. They have indeed still great cause for sorrow. Yet it is their duty to rejoice always in the Lord. To promote and encourage this we proceed to show—

II. In what respects this joy is our strength. We are as dependent on the frame of our minds as on the state of our bodies. Joy in God produces very important effects. 1. *It disposes for action.* Fear and sorrow depress and overwhelm the soul (Isa. lvii. 16). They enervate and benumb all our faculties. They keep us from attending to any encouraging considerations (Exod. vi. 9). They disable us from extending any relief to others (Job ii. 13). They indispose us for the most necessary duties (Luke xxii. 45). We cannot pray or speak or do anything with pleasure. On the contrary, a joyous frame exhilarates the soul (Prov. xvii. 2). David well knew the effect it would produce (Ps. li. 12, 13). Every one may safely adopt his resolution (Ps. cxix. 32). 2. *It qualifies for suffering.* When the spirit is oppressed the smallest trial is a burthen. In those seasons we are apt to fret and murmur both against God and man. We consider our trials as the effects of Divine wrath. Or, overlooking God, we vent our indignation against the instruments he uses. But when the soul is joyous afflictions appear light (Heb. x. 34; xii. 2). How little did Paul and Silas regard their imprisonment (Acts xvi. 25). How willing was Paul to lay down his very life for Christ (Acts xx. 24). This accords with the experience of every true Christian (Rom. v. 2, 3; 2 Cor. vi. 10).

Application. 1. *Let us not be always brooding over our corruptions.* Seasonable sorrows ought not to be discouraged. But we should never lose sight of all that God has done for us. It is our privilege to walk joyfully before the Lord (Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16; cxxxviii. 5; cxlix. 5). If we abounded more in praise, we

should more frequently be crowned with victory (2 Chron. xx. 21, 22). 2. *Let us carefully guard against the incursions of sin.* It is sin that hides the Lord from our eyes (Isa. lix. 2). Joy will not consist with indulged sin (Ps. lxvi. 18). Let us then mortify our earthly members and our besetting sins. Let us be girt with our armour while we work with our hands; nor ever grieve the Spirit, lest we provoke him to depart from us. 3. *Let us be daily going to God through Christ.* If even we rejoice in God at all it must be through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 11). It is through Christ alone that our past violations of the law can be forgiven (Col. i. 20). It is through Christ alone that the good work can be perfected in our hearts (Heb. xii. 2). And since all things are through him, and from him let them be to him also (Rom. xi. 36) —*Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A.*

On Religious Joy, as giving Strength and Support to Virtue.

viii. 10. *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*

On hearing the words of the book of the law, all the people wept. Nehemiah exhorts them to prepare themselves for serving the God of their fathers with a cheerful mind. These words contain this important truth, that to the nature of true religion there belongs an inward joy which animates, strengthens, and supports virtue.

I. **Joy is a word of various signification.** By men of the world it is often used to express those flashes of mirth which arise from irregular indulgences of social pleasure. The joy here mentioned signifies a tranquil and placid joy, an inward complacency and satisfaction, accompanying the practice of virtue and the discharge of every part of our duty. A joy of this kind is what we assert to belong to every part of religion; to characterize religion wherever it is genuine, and to be essential to its nature. In order to ascertain this, let us consider—1. *In what manner religion requires that a good man should stand affected towards God.* Rational, enlightened piety presents God not as an awful, unknown Sovereign, but as the Father of the universe, the lover and protector of righteousness, under whose government all the interests of the virtuous are safe. With delight the good man traces the Creator throughout all his works, and beholds them everywhere reflecting some image of his supreme perfection. In the morning dawn, the noontide glory, and the evening shade; in the fields, the mountains, and the flood, where worldly men behold nothing but a dead, uninteresting scene; every object is enlivened and animated to him by the presence of God. Amidst that Divine Presence he dwells with reverence, but without terror. He is under the protection of an invisible guardian. He receives the declarations of his mercy.

Objection. Are there no mortifications and griefs that particularly belong to piety—the tear of repentance, humiliation of confession, and remorse? *Reply.* There may be seasons of grief and dejection, yet this is not inconsistent with the joy of the Lord, being, on the whole, the predominant character of a good man's state; as it is impossible that during this life perpetual brightness can remain in any quarter without some dark cloud. And even the penitential sorrows and relentings of a pious heart are not without their own satisfactions. It is no unusual thing for pleasure to be mixed with painful feelings. And where the mind is properly instructed in religion, it will not long be left in a state of overwhelming dejection, but will return to tranquillity, and repossess again the joy of the Lord. 2. *Consider next the disposition of a good man towards his fellow-creatures.* That mild and benevolent temper to which he is formed by virtue and piety, a temper that is free from envious and malignant passions, is a constant spring of cheerfulness and serenity. 3. *With respect to that part of religion which consists in the government of a man's own mind, of his passions and desires, it may be thought that much*

joy is not to be expected. For there religion appears to lay on a severe and restraining hand. Strict temperance and self-denial are often requisite. But in purity, temperance, and self-government there is found a satisfaction. A man is conscious of soundness. There is nothing that makes him ashamed of himself.

II. In what respects the joy of the Lord is justly said to be the strength of the righteous. 1. *It is the animating principle of virtue; it supports its influence, and assists it in becoming both persevering and progressive.* Few undertakings are lasting or successful which are accompanied with no pleasure. Not until a man feels somewhat within him which attracts him to his duty can he be expected to be constant and zealous in the performance of it. 2. *The joy of the Lord is the strength of the righteous, as it is their great support under the discouragements and trials of life.* A good man's friends may forsake, fortune may fail, his health decay; calumny and reproach may attack his character. Then, when worldly men become peevish, dispirited, and fretful, he can possess himself calm and undisturbed. He has resources within. Much is against us in our endeavours to cultivate this disposition. We must study to correct false ideas; persuade ourselves that there are other things besides riches, honours, and sensual pleasures that are good for man; that there are joys of a spiritual and intellectual nature which directly affect the mind and heart, and which confer a satisfaction both more refined and more lasting than any worldly circumstances can confer. To endeavours of our own for rectifying and improving our taste of pleasure let us join frequent and fervent prayer to God, that he may enlighten and reform our hearts, and by his Spirit communicate that joy to our souls which descends from him, and which he has annexed to every part of religion and virtue as the *strength of the righteous.—Blair, abridged.*

Same Theme.

Joyfulness is the invigorating tonic of the Christian character. The thing that makes you a strong Christian or a weak one is your possession or deprivation of the joy of the Lord. Religion many-sided. Faith, hope, joy. Yet many whose religious principle is strong do not take bright views of Christian service. Some people go to sea because the blood of the sailor is in their veins; they love the sea; almost regret to read in Revelation that in the new heavens and earth of St. John there will be no more sea. Now others go to sea because duty drives them there. If they could go over-land they would; but there is neither bridge nor tunnel, so they must go to sea, and with much fear and sickness they go. It is very like that going to heaven. Some have delight at every step, and that is as it ought to be; some go with the hard constraint of duty upon them, and that is as it should not be. Take, as illustrative of the latter view, two types of religious character that have played an important part in the past of this country—Popery and Puritanism. Roman Catholicism—full of austerities; services mournful; chantings; suffer here or in purgatory; pictures; biographies of the ideal saint; dress of the religious orders; portraits of eminent saints. Whole tone a strange contrast to the "glad tidings of great joy." Puritanism—grand but severe men and women; many fasts, but few festivals. This sentiment of the text about the strengthening power of joy was spoken by one of those grand, all-round honourable men who come as ornaments and saviours of society—Nehemiah. His people had been captive, and were restored, and wept at their restoration, and this was said to cheer them. Bring the thing into our own times. English captive among heathen holding fast to Bible and Christian faith. Patriot rising—a Nehemiah or Garibaldi—to restore. London rebuilt—reading of law. First day of national religious celebration for 150 years. Memories of past bringing tears. But sagacious leader says, "You must above all things keep up your hearts. Weeping will cleanse, but joy is the strengthener." Thankful gladness. Is not our fathers'

God our God? Eat the fat, and send portions to the poor. Weep not, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. They were Jews, and the Jewish religion is a religion of joy. One fast and many feasts. Sabbath joyous. "O be joyful in the Lord." Judaism was, in spite of Sinai, a service of joy. Much more is the gospel joyous. "Glad tidings." "The joy set before him." "We rejoice." "Joy in presence of the angels." Strange, after that, that anybody should have brought gloom into religion. If God did not make his creatures to be happy, why did he make them at all? If God meant us to have no joy on earth, why did he fill earth with beauty and with gladness? But he did, for God is love. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Everybody knows what joy is. Joy means that faculty has seized what it wanted Now religion aims at perfection; to make most of all life. Hence its attainment is attainment of joy. In this way it takes possession of the body. "Glorify God in your body." Use it for what God has made it. Look at a machine. As those gloriously artistic ribbons come out of the loom you are glorifying, honouring the maker. Sinful gratification is against the laws of the body; for God's laws are written on the body as truly as on the Sinaitic tables of stone. Religious joy is harmony with natural law. Same with active business. Hand-craft and head-craft in righteous way. And the righteous way means the right way, and the right way means the true way. There are people who tell you that business on Christian principles means bankruptcy. There are proofs that godliness will actually pay. Golden rule. There is a divinity in business. Paul is as Christian and as holy when he sits at Damascus making tents as when he stands on Mars' Hill and preaches a sermon. To a Christian man all life is holy, all life is joyous. The same is true of intellectual life. Search for truth is pleasant. The tree of knowledge bears good fruits. So with the relative and social aspect. Laughter and jest, wit and humour, are Divine; for Divinity stamped them into us. The laughter of some men is blighting as the laughter of a fiend, and you shrink from it as much; the laughter of another is always against wrong, and on the side of right, and is healing as medicine.

Of course we must wisely distinguish between religion and the joy of religion. Let not a man suppose he is necessarily under the condemnation of God because he lacks brightness and buoyancy. Salvation is one thing, and the joys of salvation are supplementary things:—these we may do without, but that we should not be without. Joy comes out of a steady continuous sense of acceptance with God. But a man may be a true Christian and yet often fail here. For instance, in every-day life a case like this may occur. A man gets for a little while into an unaccountably nervous state. He fears the worst. Friends laugh; doctor examines; the man is assured. Is he really more healthy? No; but still he is stronger. Joy is his strength. A great many Christians act that out in spiritual things. They are safe, if anybody is safe; but oh! for this assurance of safety. If they could believe the word of God joy would come.

Joy then is the proper result of Christian faith. "Believing, we rejoice." Must not forget other side. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Trivial nature that always wants the countenance wreathed into smiles. Does not deep joy often fly as a resource to tears? Jesus Christ anointed with oil of gladness, and yet acquainted with grief; anointed with oil of gladness, and yet crowned with thorns. So deep and earnest and sympathetic that it must have been thus. Sorrow on surface, and joy in depths. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My joy." "My peace." That joy is our strength.

Then joy is a thing we are exhorted to. Joy is in our power. Not that joy must express itself after one pattern. Two persons watching a spectacle, or listening to music—one jubilant, the other silent. Prospect in nature—one exclamatory, the other still. Both have the deep joy of the scene, each in a form suited to him-

self. So there are these varying forms of religious experience—silent and speaking, calm and rapturous. Imaged in Revelation—voice of many waters, silence in heaven. Exultation when we say, "Come, let us sing unto the Lord a new song!" "Speechless awe that dares not move." In Book of Genesis it says the vegetables were to increase after their kind, and animals after their kind; and so we must serve God and enjoy his salvation after our kind. The only thing is this, that if we are not enjoying the salvation of Christ we miss the mark more or less. We have not as much as God's love has designed for us. Joy is a controllable thing. We can put ourselves in the shade or in the sunshine. We can be for ever dissecting ourselves, or contemplating Christ. Lack of faith brings joylessness. Not enough confidence in God. A sceptical man cannot be a happy man. Giant Despair's Castle is in the way of scepticism. Sometimes we are afraid to boldly claim all that is ours. "I know whom I have believed." "Now are we the sons of God." Trust Christ, and all is yours. The joy of the Lord is our strength. "A merry heart goes all the day." Band at head of regiment. Do a task you have no joy in, and one that is a delight, and see the difference. Take salvation for granted, and work from it, not for it. And, my brother, yet uncertain as to whether you ought to be a Christian or not, don't be nervous. Christ invites you to joy. A man who has less joy as a saint than as a sinner is a very poor saint, that is all. His ways are ways of pleasantness. The joys of forgiveness are the beginning of heaven. Christian joy is the strength and manliness of all true human character. And when a man enters into the saved state it is as when he enters heaven—he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Daily Bible Reading.

viii. 18. ***Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God.***

Daily reading of the word of God.

I. Why? 1. *Because of its infinite preciousness and value.* "The book of the law of God." Not *a book*, but *the book*. Value it as the gift of a Father's love; as the legacy of the Saviour's grace; as the instrument of the Spirit's power. Dear to all the faithful, because they feel that they hang upon that truth all that is most precious for time and eternity. It comes clothed with the authority of infinite truth, and crowned with the attractions of infinite love. It may be compared to that river that went out of Eden to water the garden, dividing itself into four heads:—"that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;" and it is most significantly added, "and the gold of that land is good." 'Tis a broad land of wealth unknown. Study it every day. The Scriptures are styled *oracles*—oracles of God which we may consult for our guidance. Not like the lying oracles of the heathen, which were distinguished for their ambiguity; these are the true sayings of God. It is like the Urim and Thummim, the holy oracle of the Jews, which they were privileged to consult for guidance and direction in all doubtful cases. It is given to be a lamp to our feet. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." God gave these oracles to convince of sin, to convert to Christ, to confirm in grace, and to direct and comfort in obedience. The book is called the *Testament*. The Old Testament—a legacy of God to the Jewish Church; the New—a legacy of Christ to the Christian Church. "All the promises are in him yea"—the promises of the Old and the promises of the New. The gospel describes the legacy of blessing Christ has bequeathed to his redeemed people, a legacy for both states of being, and we should study it as an heir to a great estate does title-deeds and documents. If a man does not study it, it is a sign that he does not consider there is any legacy left to him in it. And

he who does may be sure to find his name in some codicil or other. "I call that legacy my own." It is called *the book of the law of God.* A man ought to know something of the law of the country in which he lives, and something of the character of the country to which he goes. It is at once the statute book of the King of kings and the great charter of his people's privileges. The law of God's government and the law of God's grace "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Study it every day. Revelation, like the sun, must be seen by its own light, and the best of all arguments of its truth are those derived from its own pages. Those parts of the word are most precious which we have made our own by personal examination, inquiry, and experience. It is a law of compensation which obtains in Divine things as well as human, that any species of property obtained by our own effort has a heightened value: an acre of ground cultivated by our own hand, or a plant or flower reared and tended by our own care, exceeds all that we obtain or inherit by the labour or the bounty of others. So one promise examined, prayed over, and applied is more useful than whole books read in a cursory manner. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." "Now we believe, not because of thy saying!" 2. *Because of its tendency to build up the inner and spiritual life—the life of God in the soul.* Hence compared to manna, to bread, to living water. The life of the natural man is important; of the spiritual man surely not less. "The life I live is by the faith," and the life of faith can only be supported by the word of life. "Man doth not live by bread alone." All life seeks its natural food and aliment. A scientific man reads works of science; a poet converses in spirit with Chaucer and Milton; the Christian, the Divine word. "The words that I speak, they are spirit and they are life." There has been a great education of our race going on from the morning of time, by which the souls of men have been trained for eternity, by these Divine words. The humblest Christian, in studying the word, mingles with the greatest minds, with the kingly spirits that have enthroned themselves in the hearts of mighty nations. He makes himself a fellow-student with Moses on the mount; with Elijah at the cave of Horeb; with Daniel when he conversed with Gabriel; with John the Baptist in the wilderness; with the beloved disciple as he leaned on Jesus' bosom; nay, with Jesus himself; and he says, lifting to heaven an unpresumptuous eye, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." How can you hope for spirituality without retirement for these purposes? How can you hope for peace and joy in believing if the closet is deserted and the Bible is unread? Where is the wonder you complain, "My leanness, my leanness," when you feed only on the husks of worldly opinion and worldly writings, and neglect to sit down at the banquet of truth? Can you wonder that you are without the comforts of the Spirit when you do not put yourself in communion with the Spirit? 3. *Because all great revivals of the power of religion have been associated wtih high reverence for the written word.* It was in the mount that Moses received the tables of stone written by God's own finger. The prophets commenced their addresses by a careful memorial of the time and date of God's manifestation to them: "The word of the Lord came unto me." The finding of the book of the law was the commencement of better times in the later date of the Jewish monarchy. And it was when strengthened by these reports of faith that the ancient worthies wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong. Our Saxon forefathers valued and prized the word of God. King Alfred translated the Psalms for them, and the Venerable Bede the Gospel of John. It was a little leaven, but it served to keep a better faith alive; a little salt, but it tended to purify the fountains of public opinion. Before Luther the Waldenses held the faith of Christ in the fastnesses of the Alps and in the valleys of Piedmont. Our own countryman Wickliffe gave to the people the whole New Testament in their mother tongue, by which he gave a resting-place to the mind, and widely sowed the

seed of the kingdom. So much so that a contemporary says, "You could not meet two people by the way but one of them was a disciple of Wickliffe." This was the crowning work of Luther—the unsealing the fountains of Divine truth to the millions in Germany. In Italy the Reformation dawned in the same manner. If ever the flame of holiness and devotion burn brightly in your bosom, it must be fed by the word. 4. *Because by this word you must be judged.* "God shall judge men by my Gospel." "The words I speak, the same shall judge you at the last day."

II. How? Different minds take different courses. Some a chapter of Old Testament in the morning, and New Testament at night; some Psalms; some Gospels; some histories; some epistles. Whate'er is best administered is best. As to states of mind. 1. *With reverence.* "Take off thy shoe!" There should be a pause of solemn seeking and solemn waiting for a spiritual frame. Who feels the sublime dignity of a saying fresh descended from the porch of heaven? Who feels the awful weight of one of the words of the living God? How awe-struck were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk. On the frontispiece of some Bibles is written, "How awful is this place!" "So ought we," as Owen says, "to look upon the word of God with holy awe and reverence for the presence of God in it." 2. *With special affection and prayerfulness.* Go to God by prayer for a key to unlock the mysteries of the word. St. John by weeping got the sealed book open. Daniel by prayer drew an angel down from heaven to give him more light. Bow your knees before you open your Bibles. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Honour the prophetical office of Christ. It is the prerogative of the Lion of the tribe of Judah to open the books and unloose the seals. Honour the work of the Holy Spirit. No man can say that Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. 3. *Take time.* Not time? You have time to sin—none to repent? time for the world—none for God? Could God find time to write this book, and will not you to read it? Shall the sick man find no time to read his Physician's prescriptions? the condemned malefactor find no time to read his Judge's pardon? Must Joshua in the midst of war and cares of government find time to meditate on the law; and shall thy shop, or plough, or a few trivial duties discharge you? 4. *Keep the end in view.*—*Thodey.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER VIII.

Festivals.

The religious times ordained in the Law fall under three heads:—(1) Those formally connected with the institution of the Sabbath; (2) The historical or great festivals; (3) The Day of Atonement.

Immediately connected with the institution of the Sabbath are—(*a*) The weekly Sabbath itself. (*b*) The seventh new moon, or Feast of Trumpets. (*c*) The Sabbatical year. (*d*) The year of Jubilee.

The great feasts (in the Talmud, *pilgrimage feasts*) are—(*a*) The Passover. (*b*) The Feast of Pentecost, of weeks, of wheat harvest, or of the First-fruits. (*c*) The Feast of Tabernacles, or of ingathering.

On each of these occasions every male Israelite was commanded "to appear before the Lord," that is, to attend in the court of the tabernacle or the temple, and to make his offering with a joyful heart (Deut. xxvii. 7; Neh. viii. 9—12). The attendance of women was voluntary, but the zealous often went up to the Passover. Thus Mary attended it (Luke ii. 41), and Hannah (1 Sam. i. 7; ii. 19). As might be supposed, there was a stricter obligation regarding the Passover than the other feasts, and hence there was an express provision to enable those

who, by unavoidable circumstances or legal impurity, had been prevented from attending at the proper time to observe the feast on the same day of the succeeding month (Num. ix. 10, 11). On all the days of Holy Convocation there was to be an entire suspension of ordinary labour of all kinds (Exod. xii. 16; Levit. xvi. 29; xxiii. 21, 24, 25, 35); but on the intervening days of the longer festivals work might be carried on. Besides their religious purpose, the great festivals must have had an important bearing on the maintenance of a feeling of national unity. This may be traced in the apprehensions of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 26, 27), and in the attempt at reformation by Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxx. 1), as well as in the necessity which, in later times, was felt by the Roman government of mustering a considerable military force at Jerusalem during the festivals. The frequent recurrence of the sabbatical number in the organization of these festivals is too remarkable to be passed over, and (as Ewald has observed) seems, when viewed in connection with the sabbatical sacred times, to furnish a strong proof that the whole system of the festivals of the Jewish law was the product of one mind. Pentecost occurs seven weeks after the Passover; the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles last seven days each; the days of Holy Convocation are seven in the year—two at the Passover, one at Pentecost, one at the Feast of Trumpets, one on the Day of Atonement, and two at the Feast of Tabernacles; the Feast of Tabernacles, as well as the Day of Atonement, falls in the seventh month of the sacred year; and, lastly, the cycle of annual feasts occupies seven months—from Nisan to Tisri.

The agricultural significance of the three great festivals is clearly set forth in the account of the Jewish sacred year contained in Levit. xxiii. The prominence which, not only in that chapter, but elsewhere, is given to this significance in the names by which Pentecost and Tabernacles are often called, and also by the offering of "the first-fruits of wheat harvest" at Pentecost (Exod. xxxiv. 22), and of "the first of the first-fruits" at the Passover (Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26), might easily suggest that the origin of the feasts was patriarchal, and that the historical associations with which Moses endowed them were grafted upon their primitive meaning. It is, perhaps, however, a difficulty in the way of this view that we should rather look for the institution of agricultural festivals amongst an agricultural than a pastoral people, such as the Israelites and their ancestors were before the settlement in the land of promise.

The times of the festivals were evidently ordained in wisdom, so as to interfere as little as possible with the industry of the people. The Passover was held just before the work of harvest commenced; Pentecost at the conclusion of the corn harvest, and before the vintage; the Feast of Tabernacles after all the fruits of the ground were gathered in. In winter, when travelling was difficult, there were no festivals. After the Captivity the Feast of Purim (Esther ix. 20) and that of the Dedication (1 Macc. iv. 56) were instituted. The festivals of wood-carrying, as they were called, are mentioned by Josephus. What appears to have been their origin is found in Neh. x. 34. The term "the Festival of the Basket" is applied by Philo to the offering of the first-fruits described in Deut. xxvi. 1—11.—*Rev. Samuel Clark, M.A., in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary.'*

Sentences from Old Writers.

I. The Reading and Exposition of the Law. *They spake unto Ezra the scribe.* "The people may, if need be, say to Archippus, Look to thy ministry that thou fulfil it. The gifts and abilities of all good ministers are theirs, and they may call for them" (1 Cor. iii. 22). "Ezra knew that the best need hear the law that they might be kept within the bounds of obedience. Not the unruly

volt only, but the horse that is broken, hath a bit and bridle also." "The commandment was a lamp, and the law a light. The Greeks call the law the standing mind of God. And if Demosthenes could say of men's laws, that they were the invention of God; if Xenophon could say of the Persian laws, that they kept the people even from coveting any wickedness; if Cicero durst say of the Roman laws, that they far excelled and exceeded all the learned libraries of the philosophers, both in weight and worth, how much more may all this and more be said of this perfect law of God, the book whereof was here brought forth by Ezra, and read and expounded in the ears of all the people?" *Before the congregation both of men and women.* "Souls have no sexes. In Christ there is no difference." "Little pitchers have ears, and little children will understand much if well principled." "As a scribe Ezra wrote the law; and as a priest he read and expounded it." "Five or six hours they spent in holy duties, whereas the most amongst us think long of an hour; they sit, as it were, in the stocks whiles they are hearing the word read or preached, and come out of the church, when the tedious sermon runneth somewhat beyond the glass, like prisoners out of a gaol." "St. Paul laid one text to another, as artificers do the several pieces of their work, that they may perfectly agree the one with the other." "The prophets give us Moses unveiled." "Parallel texts, like glasses, set one against another, do cast a mutual light; like the sun, the Scriptures show other things, and themselves too."

II. Religious Joy. "The joy which has the Lord for its object, and comes from him, is the cause of renewing spiritual strength, so as to run and not be weary, walk and not faint, in the ways of God." "Thou canst not be fully comforted, nor have perfect refreshment, but in God." "It is no hard matter to despise human comfort when we have Divine." *This day is holy unto the Lord your God.* "Your mourning, therefore, now is as much out of season as Samson's wife's weeping was at her wedding." "One being asked whether a good man might not feed upon sweet and delicate meat; eat the fat and drink the sweet, even the choicest wines and chiefest viands? answered, Yes; except God made bees only for fools." "Spiritual joy is such a precious commodity, as that no good can match it, no evil overmatch it." "The peace of a man's conscience will appear in his countenance, as Stephen's did." "To the truly joyous the cross is anointed." *And all the people went their way to eat.* "To do all that they were directed to do. They had been in the furnace of mortification; and now they were willing to be cast into the mould of God's word and to be whatsoever the Lord would have them to be. They were only his clay and wax, a willing people, waiting for his law." *And to make great mirth.* "All kind of honest jollity; for the better exciting their hearts to true thankfulness."

III. Sacred service. *On the second day they were gathered together.* "Divine knowledge is as a great lady, that will not easily be acquainted with us but upon further suit." "Popular men should esteem knowledge as silver, noblemen as gold, princes prize it as pearls." *The priests and Levites.* "These teachers of others took no scorn to learn of Ezra, that perfect scribe." "The greatest part of those things which we know is the least part of the things which we know not." "God will not take up with a careless and slubbered service." "To do nothing for God more than needs must account too little."

CHAPTER IX.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] "The confession recorded in this chapter uses largely the language of the older Scriptures. For ver. 6 see Ps. lxxxvi. 10; Ex. xx. 11, and Deut. x. 14. For ver. 9 see Ex. iii. 7. For ver. 10 see Jer. xxxii. 20. For ver. 11 see Ex. xv. 5, 10. For ver. 12 see Ex. xiii. 21. For ver. 13 see Ex. xix. 20. For ver. 15 see Ps. cv. 40, 41. For ver. 16 see 2 Kings xvii. 14. For ver. 17 see Ps. lxxviii. 11; Ex. xxxiv. 6. For ver. 25 see Deut. vi. 10, 11. For ver. 27 see Judges ii. 14, 18. For ver. 29 see Lev. xviii. 5. For ver. 33 see Ps. cvi. 6. For ver. 35 and ver. 36 see Deut. xxviii. 47, 48."—*Crosby*. **1. The twenty and fourth day of this month**] Two days after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles. **With fasting and with sackclothes and with earth upon them**] External marks of internal grief. **Sackclothes**] Elsewhere in Eng. version sackcloth for Heb. plural.—*Crosby*. **2. Separated themselves**] Foreigners, "a mixed multitude," had become united with the chosen people by trade and marriage. **3. Stood and confessed and worshipped**] More fully shown in penitential prayer that follows after verse 5. **They read in the book of the law**] Their extraordinary zeal led them to continue this as before. **One fourth part of the day**] For three hours, twelve hours being the acknowledged length of the Jewish day (John xi. 9), so that this solemn diet of worship, which probably commenced at the morning sacrifice, was continued for six hours, *i. e.* till the time of the evening sacrifice.—*Jamieson*. "The general form and phraseology of this prayer place it among the liturgical Psalms of the Old Testament, and show it specially suitable to be used by the whole congregation. **6. All their host**] (Comp. Gen. ii. 1). **The** host of heaven who worshipped God are the angels (Ps. ciii. 21; cxlviii. 2). **7. Abram . . . . Abraham**] (Gen. xvii. 5). **Ur of the Chaldees**] Topography uncertain. Mugheir near the Persian Gulf probable. **8. Canaanites . . . . . Girgashites**] "The Hivites are left out of this enumeration, perhaps to please their descendants, the Nethinim" (see Josh. ix. 7).—*Crosby*. **15. Thou hadst sworn**] Margin—*Lift up thine hand*. Allusion to the ceremony of raising the hand in taking an oath. **17. Appointed a captain**] In Numbers xiv. 4 it is only said that they proposed to appoint; probably they actually carried out their intention, so far as to nominate a leader. **22. Divide them into corners**] "Thou didst divide them (the kingdoms and nations, *i. e.* the land of these nations) according to sides or boundaries, *i. e.* according to certain definite limits."—*Bertheau*. **The land of Sihon and the land of the king of Heshbon**] Sihon is the king of Heshbon. "Heshbon being the capital city, the passage should run thus:—the land of Sihon, or the land of the king of Heshbon."—*Jamieson*. **29. Withdrew the shoulder**] Like the refractory ox that rebels against the yoke (Zech. vii. 11; Hos. iv. 16). **32. Let not all the trouble seem little before thee**] "What seems little is easily disregarded. The sense is, Let our affliction be regarded by thee as great and heavy."—*Keil*. **38. A sure covenant**] Such solemn signing and sealing bespeaks their earnestness. This verse is the first of the tenth chapter in Hebrew.

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER IX.

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HEBRAIC CONCEPTIONS OF GOD.

THE Bible does not define God. The nearest approach to definitions are in those two remarkable sentences in St. John's Epistle—"God is light;" "God is love." Modern philosophy speaks of God as the Unknowable. One of the oldest books in the world—the Book of Job—teaches that philosophy with a difference. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" God may be known: cannot be comprehended. The secret of God is as high as heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, broader than the sea. St. Paul, the mental philosopher among the twelve apostles, speaks of "that which may be known of God." Bible tells us what God does; not what God is. Nor does it attempt to prove his existence. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." Sacred writers assume this. With a "Thus saith the Lord" many of the books open. Every

page is instinct with the presence of God. There is no relation to human life in which Eastern poets and prophets did not conceive God. He was in the generation of the righteous; a present help in time of trouble. He was a King to those who believed; a judge of those who rebelled; the helper of those who trusted. They saw God—

I. In the movements of history. "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. He rebuked the Red Sea. He did great things in Egypt, and wondrous works in the land of Ham. Our fathers angered God—not Moses, though him they angered—they angered God at the waters of strife. He gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. Many times did he deliver them. He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive. All nations are before him. Pharaoh's heart he hardens, and Cyrus' sword he employs. He takes hold of the ships of Tarshish. The world's merchandise and hire shall be holiness unto the Lord." These passages are quoted at random. It was hardly necessary to quote at all. The pages of Moses, the songs of David, the prophecies of Isaiah, teem—literally teem—with references to the presence of God in the movements of history. God in history! the seers and songsters of the Scriptures of Truth hardly condescend to say that. God in history? History is God. Men read, "Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous" (ver. 7, 8); and they say, We can see the hand of God in this. Verily there was a God. Then they turn over the pages of English History and read how we emerged out of barbarism; how a fusion of race-stocks has made us what we are—the hardiest, most truth-loving, uprightest nation under the blue sky; and they say, It is history; but they do not say, We see God. Now and then some popular orator turns to the pages of the old Chroniclers and sees how, in the reign of James I., a poor people became enlightened by the word of God, and finding no such phrase in the dictionary as "religious toleration," sped to America; and he adds, I see a Divine hand in this emigration movement. Why not boldly say, "Thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea; and their persecutors thou overthrewest" (ver. 11)? That is the Bible language for the passage of the Red Sea. Surely we, casting our glances towards the West, and noting the magnificent proportions of the American Republic, can see that the language is applicable to the passage of the Atlantic; to the colonization of the New World. Says Bancroft, the American historian, "The pilgrims were Englishmen; exiles for religion; men disciplined by misfortune; cultivated by opportunities of extensive observations; equal in rank as in rights; and bound by no code upon earth but that of religion or the public will." What cast Pharaoh and his hosts into the sea? Nothing—God. Who destroyed the Spanish Armada? Nobody—the storm. Did not, then, the same God direct both storms? What says the prophet, "Seeing many things, but thou observest not." "Seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," said Jesus the Revealer of truth.

If God had no hand in the Reformation, Martin Luther, the Mansfeld miner's son, the Augustinian monk, the darling of Wittenberg University, was simply an obstinate revolter against authority; whereas he was accustomed to console himself with the thought that the cause was not his, but God's—that God "who stays the waves upon the sea-beach, and stays them with sand." "He that has not God, let him have what else he will, is miserable," was his deliberate opinion. "God will be found there where he has engaged to be," he believed. He loved the

second Psalm. The Psalm that tells how God laughs when great men rage he loved with all his heart, "because it strikes and flashes valiantly." The Levites in the olden time sang, "Our fathers were disobedient, therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies. Nevertheless, in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee thou heardest them from heaven, and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours." And shall not we thank God for the "saviours" whom he has raised up to deliver this nation, to burst the shackles of the slave, to flood the dark places of the earth with light? Is it nothing that good Queen Bess and brave, God-fearing Oliver Cromwell once governed these realms? Were not the Puritans ever the friends of popular liberty? Can Scottish Covenanters be forgotten, or the Clapham sect become despised? So long as Nonconformity acts upon its motto, "In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things charity," it will be the instrument of God for good. When Methodism loses her cunning in spreading Scriptural holiness throughout the land, then—not till then—she will become a by-word and a proverb of reproach among the religious communities of Christendom. On the bead-roll of English worthies men and women in the generations following will look for parson Wycliffe, tinker Bunyan, gentleman Wilberforce, sturdy Howard, and sweet-souled Elizabeth Fry. These were the angels in whose presence the doors flew open, and the iron gate that shut in imprisoned men opened to them of his own accord. Every ray of light that falls upon the darker places of the earth; each blow that is struck for freedom; every the painfulest endeavour of weak men and timid women to reach truth and exhibit the beauty of holiness, is an intimation of a higher presence—a voice from the innermost sanctuary, crying, "Surely the Lord is in this place." In the movements of history the Hebrews saw God; and they heard God. And

II. In the voices of Nature. *The sun* was a globe of light, and more—the visible symbol of the invisible God. The sun brought light and life, and growth and joy, and hope and courage. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?" "The Lord God is a sun; He will give grace and glory." The sun rode in the heavens like a thing of might; no sign of weariness appeared in him. "Let them that love thee, O Lord, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." *The rock* had more than a geological message. It told of strata, growth, history of long-since-buried men; it told too of the strength, patience, endurance of God —"THE ROCK OF AGES." "He is the rock; his way is perfect." "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." *Clouds* did not merely collect the waters to pour down upon the earth: they were the treasure-houses of God. As the sun shone through them they became luminous as with the shining of the glory of the Lord. They hid the face of the scorching sun from the tired and thirsty traveller. "He spread a cloud for a covering." "His favour is as a cloud of the latter rain." *God was the keeper of the vineyard of the house of Israel.* They saw God—

III. In the lives of men. God writes his will in falling dynasties; in commercial and political changes; in solitary experiences. God speaks to us, works in us, expresses his will through us. Reliant weakness, weariness and worn-outness, trusting in God, have around them an omnipotent arm; they rest on the immoveable rock on which the world reposes. God often means to men terror, fear, law, hatred, hell; too seldom grace, salvation, light, hope, joy, strength, inspiration, courage, help, heaven. "The knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ." He taught "our Father," and revealed something like "the motherhood of God." A great God we knew before. Tenderness, patience, forbearance, forgivingness, motherliness, he showed us; restated, illustrated what lay in Old Testament less distinctly. Not by his lip only, but in his life. Whom did he seek but the sick and sad? Who sought him but the oppressed and outcast? Whom

did he ever send away empty of hope? God is in Nature; God is in history; but the whole of God is in Jesus Christ. Son of man was Son of God.

Application. 1. *My God*—not everybody's God. *God here*—not God everywhere. 2. *When do we think of God?* After wrong-doing? First thing in the morning, last thing at night, there should come to us a word of joy, providence, help—this is what God should be. Let us approach God, who is "a great King," with manly reverence; let us approach God, who is "our Father," with a child's unfaltering trust. "Let us draw near with full assurance," for "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And as the fellowship grows and deepens there will be revealed to us what is revealable of the infinite secret men call God.

The Story of God's Providence Retold.

"The invitation to praise God insensibly passes into the action of praising. 'Stand up and bless the Lord your God.' The assembled congregation blessed God. They did so by silently and heartily praying to and praising God with the Levites, who were reciting aloud the confession of sin."—*Keil.* Not as to an unknown God did they cry and make confession. He had been forgotten, but he was still familiar. "Our God," the keynote of Hebrew prayer and psalmody.

I. A choice and a covenant. "Thou art Lord alone." "Thou art the God who didst choose Abram." "Thou madest a covenant with him" (ver. 6—8). Around these central themes are grouped illustrations. The independency of God is marked in the making and preserving of all things, in confirmation whereof the host of Heaven worship him. He doeth what he will. When he chose Abram he gave him a new name. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." He who claimed service rendered reward. "Thou foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land to his seed." "Abram believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6). A man of faith will be a faithful man. God's covenants are conditioned. "The meek shall inherit the earth." "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." "With God word and deed correspond with each other." "Thou hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous."

II. The word fulfilled. "Thou sawest the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea" (ver. 9—11). The extremes of deliverance. God saw them under the taskmaster's lash; he heard when they fled. The Ever-present *coming down*, the Omniscient *looking*—this is the Biblical anthropomorphism. Admit if you will that this is not God; still it is our necessary conception of him. He is always nigh; but we do not always realize His presence. When I weep assure me that God pities; when I pray tell me that God listens; when I die whisper in my ear that God is nigh. If it be not exact phraseology it is full of comfort, and withal of truth. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" Those who are held in the bondage of evil habits, those who are striving to burst the bonds, may take the strength and courage implied in this. The Psalm-book specially exults in the all-seeing eye and ever-listening ear. The romance of reality in the histories of apostles and martyrs, in the stories of saints and sufferers, is derived from the realized nearness of God.

But deliverance is not salvation. The first step of the journey is indispensable, but insufficient. A first implies a second. Possibility is a pledge of performance. Freedom is faculty. The Red Sea opens into the desert, not into the Promised Land.

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,"

is the poetry of the common-place experience of life. "Thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them laws" (ver. 12—14). Providence without, conscience within. God was in the cloud; duty in the law. "And gavest them bread from heaven, and broughtest forth water out of the rock, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land" (ver. 15). A guiding cloud, a directing law, an unfailing supply, an assured promise. "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock."

III. Divine forbearance. "Even the fathers to whom God had shown such favour, repeatedly departed from and rebelled against him; but God of his great mercy did not forsake them, but brought them into possession of the Promised Land" (vers. 16—25). "Words are accumulated to describe the stiffnecked resistance of the people. They hardened their necks; they hardened their hearts. They said one to another, Let us make a captain and return to Egypt. In spite, however, of their stiffneckedness God—a God of pardons—did not forsake them. He did not withdraw his gracious presence, but continued to lead them by the pillar of cloud and fire. The words (ver. 20), 'Thou gavest Thy good Spirit,' &c., refer to the occurrence (Num. xi. 17, 25) where God endowed the seventy elders with the spirit of prophecy for the confirmation of Moses' authority. The definition 'good spirit' recalls Psalm cxliii. 10. The Lord also fulfilled His promise of giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites, notwithstanding their rebelliousness." —*Keil.* They were a community of slaves in process of formation into a nation. God dealt with them as with children. He did not call wrong by any other name, but he compassionated ignorance and pitied weakness. "The mercy of the Lord our God" was celebrated in later times by prophet and priest, seer and scribe. "About the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness."

IV. Disobedience chastised. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." In the wilderness they were not without punishments; but there mercy rejoiced against judgment. In the Promised Land, after long experience of the goodness and graciousness of God, their rebellions were less pardonable. So God gave them into the hands of their enemies. Still for his great mercies' sake he did not utterly consume them, nor forsake them (vers. 26—31). They rejected God's law; they slew God's prophets. Yet when they cried he heard; in their distress he sent them saviours. The majesty and mercy of God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man." "The hand of God was very heavy." "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." "Our God is a consuming fire." "God is love."

V. The past the prophet of the present. "Now, therefore, our God, let not all the trouble seem little before thee" (vers. 32—37). History had repeated itself. The disobedient, God had rejected. Weakened by oppression, they had returned to their own land. In their present distresses they pray to the God of past deliverances—the God who had said of himself that he was unchangeable.

Application. The story of Israel has been always regarded as a parable of life. "The Lord knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness."

ILLUSTRATION.

Egyptian influence on Hebrew character. "Before God gave the Commandments to the Jewish people he wrought a magnificent series of miracles to effect their emancipation from miserable slavery, and to punish their oppressors. He first made them free, and then gave them the law. It might not have been absolutely impossible for the Jews to have kept these commandments even in Egypt but the difficulties would have been almost invincible. The people were in no condition to

receive a Divine revelation. Oppression had broken their spirit, and crushed all the nobler elements of their nature. In the atmosphere which they breathed purity and virtue could hardly live. They had been degraded by the heathenism and by the vices, as well as by the severity of their masters. It was impossible for such a race as the Jews seem to have been at this period of their history to have any vigorous faith in the greatness of the God who had revealed himself to their fathers. The wealth, the greatness, the power of the world belonged to the Egyptians; contempt and wretchedness to the descendants of Abraham and the heirs of the promises. The God of their fathers was either not strong enough to defend them from intolerable evils, or else was indifferent to their distresses. God did not begin by commanding them to acknowledge his greatness and authority, and to show fidelity to himself, and to break at once with the vices to which their external condition almost bound them as with fetters of iron. He began by manifesting his greatness in acts which must have appealed most powerfully to their imagination, and made even their passions—which seem to have been almost the only elements of energy left in them—take the side of faith in himself.—*R. W. Dale, M.A.*

A Nation's Prayer.

The three annual feasts instituted by the Mosaic Law were memorials of God's goodness to Israel. His works shall be kept in everlasting remembrance. At the Feast of the Passover the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Egypt; at Pentecost the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai; and at the Feast of Tabernacles the mercies of God during their wilderness journey and the ingathering of the harvest. Never, since the days of Joshua, had the Feast of Tabernacles been celebrated with such solemnity as under the teaching of Ezra and the government of Nehemiah. The services of New Year's Day, or the Feast of Trumpets, had yielded the precious fruits of godly sorrow for sin, and of holy, charitable joy (chap. viii.). One sermon may bring forth great results. The Scripture narrative of the festival closes by informing us "that day by day, from the first day unto the last day, they read in the Book of the Law of God; and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly according unto the manner." God's word was the "joy and rejoicing of their hearts;" God's book, the first of books and the best of books. Here we have consolation in sorrow, directions in duty, and armour in the day of battle; a guide-book for every road, and a chart for every sea. In our Lord's time the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God ('Paul's Missionary Journeys.' 'Vaudois Christians.' 'Wycliffites.' 'Translation and Diffusion in Modern Times').

The continued and protracted services of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Trumpets, produced an extraordinary impression on the public mind. The revival of religion was not merely metropolitan, but national. The deed of Jerusalem was the deed of the whole people; the voice of Jerusalem was the voice of the many thousands of Israel. Immediately upon the close of the services at the Feast of Tabernacles, we read that "the children of Israel were assembled with fasting," &c. (vers. 1—3).

The service of national dedication probably commenced at nine o'clock in the morning with the usual sacrifices. The reading and the exposition for three hours prepared the way for the solemn supplications of the people. These occupied three hours more, and were closed by the offering of the evening sacrifice, and by the public signing of the national covenant. The heads of this form of supplication and dedication were probably drawn up by Nehemiah, who was the first to append his signature. Copies were probably distributed among the Levites, who led the people in prayer. The national dedication opens with solemn worship of God. His great and Infinite Majesty is adored. "Blessed be thy glorious name." Then follows a retrospect of God's mercies to Israel. With this review of mercies was interwoven penitential confession of sin. First they acknowledged the sins of their fathers (verse 16); then they pass on to the transgressions of their fathers under their kings (verse 26). They acknowledged the righteous dealings of God,

and their own disobedience to his Word. Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly; and they bring before God the one petition in this pathetic appeal: "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, *let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us*, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people." They implore mercy, they deprecate judgment, and with one accord resolve to bind themselves unto the service of God, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. This was the conclusion of the whole matter. As the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, they make a solemn promise to God; and that it might be sure the covenant is written, and as we read in the thirty-eighth verse, "Our princes, Levites, and priests seal unto it." We are told in the opening of the tenth chapter, that at the top of the eighty-two representative signatures is inscribed NEHEMIAH THE TIRSHATHA, THE SON OF HACHALIAH. He had set a noble example to his people, and now, at a time of intense religious feeling, he puts himself in the fore-front to lead them to God. "Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."

Have we, as Englishmen, no retrospect to make? Have not we a history to review with thankfulness, and a duty to God and to one another? A nation is made of individuals. A national dedication implies personal dedication.—*Rev. J. M. Randall; abridged.*

THE WORLD PRESERVED BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

ix. 6. *Thou preservest them all.*

The providence of God may be regarded as exercised either in the preservation of the world or in the government of it, to which two main heads all the acts of Divine Providence are reducible.

God's preservation of the world. In that admirable address that is made to God in the name of the Jewish Church, after celebrating him as the great Creator of the universe, are those noble expressions—"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein;" it is added, "and thou preservest them all." The preserving this vast frame of nature, and all things that are therein, is owing to the same omnipotent being that created them. We must not imagine that things, when once put into being, continue to exist independently of him that first created them. It is easily conceivable that the self-existent Jehovah, who existed necessarily from everlasting, must certainly exist to everlasting by the intrinsic excellency of his own most perfect nature. But the case is otherwise as to contingent beings, who have the source and basis of their existence without them. The works of men's hands may subsist at a distance from the hands which fashioned them; but the creatures can never exist in an absolute separation from God, who is always most intimately and essentially present with his own works. Consider this preservation of all things, which is an eminent act of Divine providence, as extending to the whole inanimate creation, and of all things that have life in their different degrees.

1. *God, by his constant powerful influence, upholdeth the inanimate creation, this huge material system, in all its parts.* As at the first formation of it he put things into a certain order, so it is by his power and wisdom that this order and constitution of things is maintained according to the first establishment. All things in the material world proceed according to a settled rule or method. Sun, moon, and stars; fertile earth, minerals, vegetables. As God said at the first creation, "Let the earth bring forth," &c. (Gen. i. 11); so by his pro-

vidential concourse, and according to his appointment, the plants, the herbs, the trees, the flowers in all their tribes, and the various kinds of grain, spring up from their several kinds, and gradually grow up into maturity. The species of them are still continued and kept distinct, and they uniformly preserve their several virtues, their distinct forms and appearances, and bring forth their several productions in the appointed seasons.

2. *God preserveth the beings that have life and sense, with their several capacities and instincts.* "Thou preservest them all" might be rendered, "Thou quickenest them all," or "maintainest them all in life."

God preserveth and upholdeth the inferior brute animals in their several species, which by a wonderful provision are successively propagated according to established laws, and continue to be furnished in all ages with the same organs, powers, and appetites, and the same admirable instincts.

It is God that preserveth the angels in their several degrees. None of them have an independent existence.

In him we exist, or have our being. As he gave us our existence at first, and made us of such a particular order of beings, so by him we are continued in existence, and in that kind of existence which belongeth to us as creatures of such a species. In God we not only exist, or have our being, but in him we live. As it was he that first established the wonderful vital union between soul and body in man, so it is by his care and influence that it subsisteth. To this it is owing that our food nourisheth and strengtheneth us, that the vital functions are carried on, and that we are enabled to exercise our several sensations. "The God of my life." And as it is in God that we exist and live, so it is in or by him that we move. He originally gave us the power of motion, and organs admirably fitted for carrying it on, and it is through him that we are continued in the use and exercise of those organs; so that it may be justly said that we cannot move a foot, or lift up a hand, without him. And this holdeth equally with regard to the operations of our souls as the motions of our bodies. As he hath endued our souls with the admirable faculties of understanding, with memory, free agency, and hath implanted in us affections of various kinds; so by his providential concourse and support of our faculties we apprehend, judge, reason, remember, and freely determine our own actions. It is he that upholdeth the powers which he gave us, and enableth us to exert those powers. And this he doeth not only when we do good, but when we employ our powers in acting wickedly; and yet this doth not derive the least stain of guilt upon God, or make him the author of our sins. The natural active power and the use of it, which is in itself good, is from God; the abuse of it to sinful purposes is wholly owing to ourselves, and to the corruption of our wills. For if he should withdraw his sustaining influence from men, the moment they attempt to abuse their natural powers, this would be absolutely to hinder them to exercise their liberty; nor could they in that case be accounted free agents at all. As the God of nature he ordinarily upholdeth or sustaineth them in being and in the use of their natural powers, in what manner soever they act; and then afterwards, as the moral governor, he will call them to an account for their actions, and will reward or punish them accordingly.

Practical Reflections. 1. What admiring thoughts should we entertain of God, and what diminishing thoughts of ourselves and all created beings! 2. What a just propriety and dominion God hath on and over us! 3. He is perfectly acquainted with all our thoughts, words, and actions, and all the events which befall us. 4. How strange and inexcusable will our conduct be if we allow ourselves in an habitual neglect and forgetfulnes of the Deity! 5. Since God continually preserveth us he hath an undoubted right to govern us.—*John Leland, D.D.*, 1766. *abridged.*

The Mercy of God.

ix. 17. *A God ready to pardon.*

The mercy of God the most delightful subject. It is so in its own nature, and relatively to us who have so great need of it, who have so much depending upon it, who must perish for ever without it. The thought that the greatest Being in the universe is the most compassionate is itself elevating. Mournful that this subject is so little regarded, awakens so little emotion; that all subjects but those immediately relating to duty, affect us. Yet how delightful is it to the Christian when he is brought to apprehend the truth and rest upon it! That God is ready to pardon, that he waits to be gracious, is a joyful topic to those who know themselves, who have been taught to estimate the value of Divine friendship.

I. A doctrine to be established. There is a strange tendency to doubt it We speak of news too good to be true; and under humiliating sense of our own worthlessness are at least ready to make an exception in our own case—"If the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be!" The power of unbelief is great, the resistance offered by conscience is great, the prevalence of fear induced by guilt is great. Exodus xxxiv. 6 contains the doctrine and gives mercy pre-eminence. 1. *The direct statements of Scripture.* The object of all revelation is to establish and explain the doctrine of God's mercy. Direct assertions, gracious promises, inspired prophecy. Twenty-nine times in one Psalm "his mercy endureth!" "Who is a God like unto Thee?" "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." "Your Father in heaven is merciful." These repetitions show the resistance against it really, the difficulty of believing it, the necessity of being grounded in it. No worship without it, no hope, no love, no joy, no obedience. 2. *The positive facts exhibited in his dispensation.* The gift of his Son. "Herein is love." "He that spared not his own Son." The gift of his Spirit: Divine revelation, ordinances, heaven at last. Discovery of his own character: harmony of attributes, long-suffering to the world in general. Why mitigations of trial? excitements of hope?—prodigality of good gifts. This world a great volume of mercy written within and without. 3. *Some striking instances of his readiness to pardon.* Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, thief, prodigal, Paul. "*And such were some of you.*" Every sinner deems himself chief of sinners, and his conversion the greatest miracle, because he knows most of himself.

II. A doctrine to be personally applied. Not a doctrine for others merely, but for ourselves. Go to God for it. "Have mercy upon me." 1. *To produce an immediate appeal to it.* We need it deeply. Of no use to know the fact—the business is to build upon it, and say, "I will arise." Approach the mercy-seat by faith in Christ. If you doubt it, test it. "It is a faithful saying." 2. *To awaken cordial admiration of the method of redemption.* 3. *To check our tendency to distrust and despondency.* Very prevalent in all minds; specially those newly awakened. They do not doubt God's ability, but willingness. We have all a great tendency to indulge dishonourable thoughts of God. 4. *To produce affection, contrition, obedience.*

III. A doctrine to be carefully guarded from abuse. 1. *The loiterer in religion.* To be had at any time, hence delay. 2. *The self-sufficient Pharisee.* Only through the cross. To the truly contrite. 3. *The man who sins that grace may abound.* Always in connection with sanctity. 4. *Those who altogether presume upon it.* God is righteous. There is a judgment of God. —*Thodey.*

Illustrations:—"It is harder to get sin felt by the creature than the burden when felt removed by the hand of a forgiving God. Never was tender-hearted surgeon more willing to take up

the vein, and bind up the wound of his fainting patient when he hath bled enough, than God is by his pardoning mercy to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent."—*Gurnall.*

"God will pardon a repentant sinner more quickly than a mother would snatch her child out of the fire."—*Vianney.*

SAME THEME.

God absolutely incomprehensible: the highest archangel cannot "find him out unto perfection." Yet we are not called to worship an unknown God. All his works praise him, but his word which he hath magnified above all his name peculiarly reveals him. In the sacred volume some clouds and darkness are round about him. Subjects are occasionally intimated which lie beyond the reach of our present faculties, concerning which we may safely follow the advice of the poet: "Wait the great teacher, Death." Scripture renders things plain and obvious in proportion as they are important and necessary. Some truths are written as with a sunbeam—such are those which regard our state as sinners, and are calculated to draw forth our faith and hope in God. For we are saved through faith; we are saved by hope. Man fell by losing his confidence in God; and he is only to be recovered by regaining it. For which purpose we read not only that there is forgiveness with him, but that he is a GOD READY TO PARDON.

I. What is necessary to render the subject interesting? Three things. 1. *A conviction of guilt.* "They that are whole need not the physician," &c. "The full soul loathes the honeycomb," &c. In vain we present alms to the affluent, or offer pardon to the innocent. Have you ever lived a day as you ought? Have you not at least been chargeable with sins of omission? The law begins with the object of all adoration, and requires that we serve God alone. Have you never transferred to the creature that supreme regard due to the Creator? If you have daily worshipped the Supreme, has it been in spirit and in truth? never taken his name in vain, "mocked him with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue?" Have you not squandered many precious Sabbath hours? But you are sure you are no murderer! Is there, then, no one dead in whose removal you have rejoiced? Is there no one alive at whose continuance you have inwardly repined? Have you never been angry with your brother without a cause? You repel with indignation the charge of theft! Is it not pride rather than principle that has sometimes restrained you; or the fear of the consequences rather than a sense of the sin? Are you a stranger to all unjust gain? Always paid fair wages? never robbed the poor? Have you done unto others as you would they should do unto you? 2. *An apprehension of our danger as transgressors.* The present effects of trangression! These only the beginning of sorrow. Can you flee from him who is everywhere; and everywhere the sin-avenging God? There is only one way of deliverance. It is forgiveness. 3. *A discovery of the privileges of a pardoned state.* We talk of happiness. Oh, what a change to be delivered from the wrath to come; to know that God's anger is turned away; that from an enemy he is become a friend—a friend giving us cordial access to all the rights of innocency, and entitling us to a felicity superior to the happiness of Adam in paradise, and even of an angel in glory! "Being justified by faith," &c.

II. The proofs which establish the truth of the doctrine. 1. *The provision he has made for the exercise of pardon.* "It became him"—we use his own language—it became him to administer this pardon in a peculiar way. It was necessary that sin should be condemned in the flesh, even while it was forgiven. It was necessary that God's law should not appear so rigid as to require relaxation, or so changeable and weak as to admit of dispensation; but be magnified and made honourable. It was necessary that God's truth should be seen as well as his grace and his righteousness as well as his mercy. Of his own self-moved compassion he has reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ. "He has made him to

be sin for us," &c. "Herein is love," &c. 2. *The promptitude with which he pardons on our return.* "Before they call I will answer, and while they speak I will hear." ('Parable of Prodigal Son.') 3. *His earnestness to excite us to seek after the blessing.* It would be enough to prove that a man was ready to pardon if he yielded immediately upon the offender's submission and application; but God not only waits to be gracious, he comes forward, he beseeches, he urges; yes—by the uneasiness of conscience, by the afflictions of life, by the importunity of friends, by the addresses of ministers—it is as the Apostle says, "As though God did beseech you to be reconciled to God." Seek evidence—4. *In the character of those who have received pardon.* The chief of sinners—Manasseh, the dying thief, the murderers of Christ, the Corinthian converts. Seek evidence—5. *In the number of those who obtain forgiveness.* There are thousands more than we are aware of, even when we send forth Candour to reckon them; and when they shall be all gathered together, out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people, they will be found a multitude which no man can number.

III. The way in which this subject may be abused, and the manner in which it ought to be improved. The subject is abused when it leads us to deny any disposition in God to punish. God is not only to be viewed as a tender father, but a moral governor.

The subject is abused when it encourages us to hope for pardon in ways not warranted by the word of God. For instance—thus, unwarranted is our hope when we expect it *without a reference to the mediation of Christ;* when we expect pardon *without repentance;* when we expect this pardon *by delaying an application for it to the close of life;* when we expect *to find this pardon in another world if we fail to obtain it in this.* But what is the proper improvement we should make of this delightful subject? It should yield encouragement to the broken-hearted, and consolation to those who have believed. It demands not only our admiration and praise; it calls upon us to imitate as well as to admire. Is he a God ready to pardon? "Be ye followers of God, as dear children. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—*Jay, abridged.*

Promises Kept.

ix. 18—21. *When they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not,* &c.

The Faithful Promiser—is not this one of the "surnames" of God?

I. This is the verdict of history. Nehemiah and his Levites knew what they said and whereof they affirmed. Was it not written in the book of Moses (Ex. xiii. 21, 22; Num. xiv. 14), that the pillar of cloud departed not from them by day, neither the pillar of fire by night? Were there not chronicles that told how for their mouth he provided manna, and for their mind instruction (ver. 20)? See Num. xi. 17, 25; Num. xi. 6—9; xx. 2—8. Nothing awanting (ver. 21). God was in Hebrew history: not confined to Hebrew history. England's God. America's God. Men who planted that republic had Bible on their right hand.

II. The statements of Scripture. Psalms in especial addressed to the God of the promises. The psalmists called; he answered. This they make their plea when next they cry—"Doth his promise fail?" "He remembered his holy promise." "Exceeding great and precious promises." "The word of the Lord is tried." Those whom the book canonizes have set to their seal that God is true.

III. The confirmations of experience. "God punishes the persecutors of his people energetically. Our pillar of cloud, which shows us the way to our everlasting fatherland, is the ministry of the Gospel, in which God is truly present and powerful. Although God does not immediately place all the godly in fruitful and pleasant places, nor give them bread from heaven, nor water from the rock; still he gives them, notwithstanding, necessary nourishment and clothing wherewith they should be satisfied."—*Starke.* In despondency trace the footprints of God in the past. "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." This the strongest confirmation; most unassailable reason.

What we have felt and seen,
With confidence we tell;
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.

The History of a Generation.

ix. 21. *Forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness.*

This is the bright side of the story of his people Israel. "The penal portion of the wanderings" (Numbers xiv. 1—39; Hebrews iii.).

I. Every generation inherits the past. "Your children, which in that day" (of rebellion) "had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it" (Deut. i. 39). The fathers sinned; the children suffered. Hereditary diseases. Superstitions, political combinations. "We are the heirs of all the yesterdays."

II. The task of each generation in the present. We receive our fathers' uncompleted tasks. Their plans indicate our power of performance; their aims an index-finger. But new times new methods; a fresh age fresh needs. To-day is not yesterday. Victorian age an advance, calling for all energies. "Forward, forward, let us range." Patriarchal times, prophetic period, apostolic age. "Little children; young men; fathers." Parables of growth in Gospels of Jesus. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." "Grow!" Peter is here not a whit behind his beloved brother Paul.

III. The responsibility of the present generation. We inherit to transmit; we labour to secure blessings for coming generations. The Hebrews of Nehemiah's day found consolation in the memory of God's abounding goodness to their faithless fathers. We have inherited freedom; the future will require it at our hands. In this sense is that text applicable—"Hold that fast which thou hast." Pass on the torch of truth to other hands; quench not the Spirit of God. Thy memory will be invaluable; thy work faithfully done a treasure. Let not the chain be snapped—past, present, future. The "continuous purpose" of him who sees the end as well as the beginning! The humblest life is not mean. The tiniest task is not insignificant. The issues of to-day are in the far-off future.

Secular Prosperity inimical to Spiritual Life.

ix. 25, 26. *They took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.*

Introduction.—Let us define our terms. Prosperity—life. Secular—spiritual are here contrasted. Prosperity is outside us. It is the realization of

one's hope. The prosperous man has his wishes gratified. "We must distinguish between felicity and prosperity; for prosperity leads often to ambition, and ambition to disappointment."—*Landor.* "A man's *life* consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Secular; spiritual—a distinction and a difference. Often falsely made. All things pertaining to this present world are not secular. "It is not the work that makes the workman holy, but it is the workman's heart that consecrates the toil."—*Cumming.*

I. The value of prosperity. "They took strong cities," and thus became a strong nation. "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, *and subdue* it, and have dominion over every living thing." The earth is the Lord's, but he hath given it to the children of men. "Money answereth all things." Art, science, commerce, civilization, religion, are aided by prosperity. The refinements of life are foes of the lower passions. The devil should not have the best music, nor the best pictures, nor the highest knowledge. Christians! Claim the world for God. It is his; he made it, he upholds it, he sustains it, he redeemed it, he is restoring it. And because it is his it is yours. "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Illustration:—Riches are the stairs whereby men climb up into the height of dignity, the fortification that defends it, the food it lives upon, the oil that keeps the lamp of honour from going out. Honour is a bare robe if riches do not lace and flourish it, and riches a dull lump till honour give a soul to quicken it.—*Adams.*

II. The danger of prosperity. "They became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. They rebelled against thee." They accepted *God's gifts;* they rejected *God.* "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." *My* fruits, *my* barns, *my* goods, *my* soul. Self stood where God should stand. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Are the poor my poor? "Every man for himself." This is the world's policy; the tone, if not the language, of unconsecrated prosperity. Forget God, and you will neglect man.

Illustrations:—Prosperity is no friend to a sanctified memory, and therefore we are cautioned, when we are full, lest we forget God. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, was no sooner safe on shore, and in the enjoyment of plenty, than he forgot God, and drowned himself in wine.—*Gurnall.*

Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns, ten thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles. The world, siren-like, sings us and sinks us; it kisses us and betrays us, like Judas; it kisses us and smites us under the fifth rib, like Joab.—*Brooks.*

It is one of the worst effects of prosperity to make a man a vortex instead of a fountain; so that, instead of throwing out, he learns only to draw in.—*Beecher.*

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder, and that craves wary walking.—*Shakespeare.*

Prosperity most usually makes us proud, insolent, forgetful of God, and of all duties we owe unto him. It chokes and extinguishes, or at least cools and abates, the heat and vigour of all virtue in us. And as the ivy whilst it embraces the oak sucks the sap from the root, and in time makes it rot and perish; so worldly prosperity kills us with kindness, whilst it sucks from us the sap of God's graces, and so makes our spiritual growth and strength to decay and languish. Neither do men ever almost suffer an eclipse of their virtues and good parts, but when they are in the full of worldly prosperity.—*Downame.*

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—*Agur.*

In all time of our tribulation; *in all time of our wealth;* in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us.—*The Litany.*

III. The safeguard of prosperity. *Remember thy stewardship.* "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" "The poor ye have always with you"

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. Get to give; gather to scatter. And as the husbandman sows to reap so shalt thou. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Illustration: — In everything to give and receive is the principle of numerous blessings: in seeds, in scholars, in arts. For if any one desire to keep his art to himself, he subverts both himself and the whole course of things. And the husbandman, if he bury and keep the seeds in his house, will bring about a grievous famine. So also the rich man, if he fails thus in regard of his wealth, will destroy himself before the poor, heaping up the fire of hell more grievous upon his own head. Therefore, as teachers, however many scholars they have, impart some of their love unto each; so let thy possession be—many to whom thou hast done good.—*Chrysostom.*

Responsibility of Honour.

ix. 38. *We make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." These were the words of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah to a discouraged man. But because they are the words of a true prophet of God they contain a philosophy. A prophet in occasional Old Testament language is a seer—*one who sees.* Power is good but it exacts penalty.

I. In office and position. "Our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it." And the first name was that of Nehemiah the Tirshatha. The strongest must carry the burdens; the tallest be exposed to the fire of the enemy. Statesmen, reformers, scientists, preachers, teachers—the best-hated men.

II. In intellectual and moral elevation. The strong must lend an arm to the weak; the wise pour out their treasures to enlighten the ignorant. Those who know the way must guide those who don't. The sun lives for the fields and homes of men. The stars enlighten other worlds. "The Lord *will give* grace and glory; *no good thing will he withhold* from them that walk uprightly." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but *to minister, and to give* his life a ransom for many."

III. In national supremacy. "A strong nation." "A great people." "An increasing territory." "The sun never sets on the Queen's dominions," &c. Every boast implies a duty. "Italian unity;" "German Fatherland;" "American Republic;" "England's sway." Be it ever remembered that with honour comes responsibility; with greatness claims. What then? Biblical fear not! "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee." "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." Strength without God is weakness; weakness with God is strength. "Where he appoints I go." And thus directed, when I am weak, then am I strong.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER IX.

Sentences from Old Writers.

I. From feasting to fasting (ver. 1—3). "There is in this present life an interchange of all things, a succession of feasting and fasting. Of the best whilst here it may be said, unhappy you cannot call him, happy you may not. One compareth him to the Ark, which was ever transportative, till settled in Solomon's Temple; another to quicksilver, which hath in itself a principle of motion, but not of rest." "Deadness of spirit is apt to follow our liveliest joys; but that must be looked to, and security prevented, which is wont to seize upon men after holy duties, like as worms and wasps eat the sweetest fruits." "It was a fast that men appointed, but such a fast as God had chosen. They were restrained from weeping (chap. viii. 9), but now they were directed to weep. The joy of our holy feasts must give way to the sorrow of our solemn fasts when they come. Everything is beautiful in its season." "Confession is the way to the kingdom; walk in it; only it must be joined with confusion of sin, as here. They separated themselves from all strangers, they abandoned their darling sin, they kept themselves from their iniquity." "They that intend by prayers and covenants to join themselves to God must separate themselves from sin and sinners." "Fasting without prayer is a body without a soul." "In the glass of the law we may see our deformities and defilements, and know what to acknowledge and what to amend." "The Word will direct and quicken prayer."

II. A story of Divine guidance (ver. 4—38). *They cried with a loud voice—Unto the Lord their God.* "As being in covenant with them. This shows their faith, as the former their fervency. Faith is the foundation of prayer; and prayer is the fervency of faith." *Then the Levites said, Stand up.* "Gird yourselves and serve the Lord. Be instant, or stand close to the work (2 Tim. iv. 2); set sides and shoulders to it; rouse up yourselves and wrestle with God. In the primitive times the ministers prepared the people to serve God, by saying, Lift up your hearts." *Stand up.* "For though they are before said to stand, yet, through shame and confusion of face, and awe of the Divine Majesty, might be fallen on their faces to the ground." *And bless the Lord your God for ever.* "If we should do nothing else all our days, yea, as long as the days of heaven shall last (said that martyr), but kneel upon our knees and sing over David's psalms to God's praise, yet should we fall short of what we owe to the Lord, who is most worthy to be praised." *And blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.* "These holy Levites, having called upon the people to bless God, break forth into the performance of this Divine duty themselves. So St. Paul often, exhorting the saints to pray, falls a-praying for them." "When we have done our utmost herein we can never overdo." "As oft as we breathe we are to breathe out the praises of God, and to make our breath like the perfumed smoke of the Tabernacle." *Thou art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven,* &c. "The first article of our Creed is fitly made the first article of our praises." "God's providence extends itself to the highest beings, for they need it; and to the meanest, for they are not slighted by it." "Jehovah is God's incommunicable name; that holy and reverend name of his, which Jews pronounce not, we too oft profane, at least by not considering the import of it, which is enough to answer all our doubts and to fill us with strong consolation, had we but skill to spell all the letters in it." "With great skill and artifice God has made heaven three stories high" (2 Cor. xii. 2; Heb. xi. 10). "Of the heaven of heavens no natural knowledge can be had, nor any help by human arts; for it is neither aspectable nor movable." "God may be

read in the great book of nature, which hath three leaves—heaven, earth, and sea." *And foundest his heart faithful.* "He must needs find it so who hath made it so." *And madest a covenant with him.* "Wherever he finds a faithful heart he will be found a faithful God." *And heardest their cry.* "Though mixed with much murmuring. So he heard that pitiful poor prayer of David, 'I said in mine haste, I am cut off from thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee.' God heareth the young ravens, though they have but a hoarse and harsh note, making no melody to move pity, and cry but by implication only, and not directly unto him." *And showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh.* "That sturdy rebel whom neither ministry, nor misery, nor miracle, nor mercy could possibly mollify." *And gavest them bread from heaven, &c.* "God rained down angels' food, and set the fluid abroach; and this he did for their hunger, for their thirst, fitting his favours according to their need and request. Besides that, their bread was sacramental, whereof they communicated every day. Their drink also was sacramental, that this ancient Church might give no warrant of a dry communion: for they did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, the same that we do at the Lord's Supper." *Hearkened not to thy commandments.* "The word of God they heard, but they did not hearken to God's commandments; and the works of God they saw, but they were not mindful of his wonders." *A God ready to pardon.* "It is our comfort that we have to do with a forgiving, sin-pardoning God, that doth it naturally (Exod. xxxiv. 6), plentifully (Isa. lv. 7), constantly (Ps. cxxx. 4). This should be as a perpetual picture in our hearts." *They made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God.* "These be thy gods (Exod. xxxii. 4). It was the serpent's grammar that first taught men to decline God in the plural number: ye shall be as gods" (Gen. iii). *They lacked nothing.* "Nor more shall they that seek the Lord lack any good thing. God will not be a wilderness to them, or a land of darkness. A sufficiency they shall be sure of, if not a superfluity; yea, in the midst of straits they shall be in a sufficiency" (1 Tim. vi. 6). *So they possessed the land of Sihon.* "God's favours must not be mentioned in the lump only, and by wholesale; but particularly enumerated and celebrated." *The land concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers.* "And they disposed of it by will to their posterity, as if they had been in present possession. God's promises are good surehold: the patriarchs would be buried there, though they died in Egypt, and keep possession as they could; for they knew that all was their own." *So the children went in.* "After that they had been held a long while under the Egyptian servitude. God knows how to command his favours to us; which lightly come by are lightly set by." *And delighted themselves in thy great goodness.* "They lived in God's good land, but not by God's good laws." *They wrought great provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies.* "Sin and punishment are tied together with chains of adamant." "They that would not serve God in their own land were made to serve their enemies in a strange land." "It is a pity good land should have bad inhabitants; but so it was with Sodom." "Fatness and fulness often make men proud and sensual." *After they had rest they did evil again.* "As standing pools breed vermin; as sedentary lives are subject to diseases. If men be not poured out from vessel to vessel, they will soon settle upon their lees. We are commonly best when worst." *And hardened their neck.* "To sinews of iron they added brows of brass." *Thou art a gracious and merciful God.* "And this is most seen when misery weighs down, and nothing but mercy turneth the scale." *Behold, we are servants this day.* "A sad change. But see what work sin makes!" *We make a sure covenant, &c.* "He that bears an honest mind will not startle at assurances; nor will those that know the deceitfulness of their own hearts think them needless."

CHAPTER X.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] **Vers. 1—27.]** "First came the name of the governor, *the Tirshatha;* **next** *Zedkijah*, perhaps the secretary to the governor. Then follow twenty-one names of *priests*, **seventeen** *Levites*, and forty-four of *the chief of the people.*" **Ver. 28. The rest of the people]** Represented by the heads of the nations who had sealed the covenant. These sealed; those swore. **All they that had separated themselves]** "The descendants of those Israelites who had been left in the land, and who now joined the new community."—*Keil.* **Ver. 30, 31.]** "Besides the general obligation to observe all the commandments, judgments, and statutes of God, two points, then frequently transgressed, are specially mentioned. In ver. 30, that we would not give our daughters to the people of the lands, nor take their daughters for our sons. In ver. 31, that if the people of the land brought wares or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and would let the seventh year lie, and the loan of every hand. To the sanctification of the Sabbath pertained the celebration of the Sabbatical year in which the land was to lie untilled and unsown" (Ex. xxiii. 10).—*Keil.* **Vers. 32—39.]** Having agreed to keep the law they then resolved to maintain the Temple service. **Ver. 32. The third part of a shekel]** The law required half a shekel; perhaps reduced to one-third in consequence of the people's poverty. **Ver. 34. We cast the lots for the wood offering]** "The carrying of the wood had formerly been the work of the Nethinims. But few of them having returned, the duty was assigned as stated in the text. The practice afterwards rose into great importance, and Josephus speaks of the Xylophoria, or certain stated and solemn times, at which the people brought up wood to the Temple."—*Jamieson.* **Ver. 38. The priest shall be with the Levites when they take tithes]** A prudential arrangement. The presence of a dignified priest would prevent the people deceiving the Levites, or the Levites defrauding the priests.—*Jamieson.* **The tithe of the tithes]** The Levites, having received a tenth of all land produce, were required to give a tenth of this to the priests. The Levites were charged with the additional obligation to carry the tithes when received, and deposit them in the Temple stores, for the use of the priests.—*Jamieson.* **Ver. 39. We will not forsake the house]** The people swore to maintain, the priests and Levites to serve, the Temple.

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER X.

Ver. 28—31. Unworldliness.
„ 29. Moses.
„ 32—39. Voluntary Taxation.
Ver. 39. Zeal for the Sanctuary.
„ 39. Zeal for God's House expressed in a holy resolution not to forsake it.

UNWORLDLINESS.

X. 28—31. ***And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; and that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: and if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.***

THEY did not pray to be taken out of the world; they did resolve to keep themselves from its evil. Is that biblical unworldliness? St. James says, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Does the Apostle stand alone in this? Is he carried away by the vehemence of his feelings as public speakers sometimes are? He was pre-eminently a calm man. He weighed his words. The men of his age styled him "the just." He was a man of weight. And the key-note of his epistle

is struck in the sermon on the mount. Let us listen to the teaching of Jesus, so tranquil in its tone: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Unfortunately use has dulled the edge of these beautiful words. Could we listen to them as they deserve to be heard they would sound strangely. They distinguish between things that differ—the world and God. They separate the worshippers of the world from the worshippers of God. They tell of a reciprocal influence. If we turn from Christ to Paul the strain is the same. "Be not conformed to this world, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." "The time is short: it remaineth, that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Take one more step—from Paul to John. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world."

I. What is the forbidden world? 1. *Not the material world.* "Every creature of God is good." The world is God's: he made it; he gloried in it; he upholds it. It is a mark of God's likeness to enjoy this beautiful world. In the world God is mirrored. When night draws its curtain and hangs up its silvery lamps,

> All things are calm, and fair, and passive. Earth
> Looks as if lulled upon an angel's lap
> Into a breathless dewy sleep: so still
> That we can only say of things, they be!

It is said that the first Napoleon was once on the deck of a vessel surveying such a scene when he overheard two of his officers in discussion, and one denying the existence of God. Going towards them he said, "Gentlemen, I heard one of you say there is no God; then pray tell me who made all this?" pointing as he spoke to "the beads of light strung o'er night's dark brow." Think you God has forbidden us to love this beautiful world? Why has he hidden it from us? Why has he made science, art, health, life itself, dependent on the study of it? Is it not that he would have us cultivate its friendship and worm out its secret? and whether we gaze with awe on the worlds upon worlds circling in distant space, or the worlds within worlds in each the minutest creation of God, rise from our daily contemplation, as he rose on the first day of its existence, with the words upon our lips—"It is very good;" "He hath done all things well." 2. *Not the men who are in the world.* If the world is dear to God because he made it and sustains it, how much more man, whom he has redeemed with his Son's most precious blood? We have been on the Mount with Christ. Let us revisit it. He shall teach us our relations to the world of men. "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." Did Christ scorn men? He scorned, hated, recoiled from, denounced sin; but the sinner he sought, soothed, taught, won, and rejoiced over. Christ had human affections. Broad enough to embrace a world was the love of Christ, and yet he needed human love. And in selected homes and from selected hearts he got what he wanted. God has not outlawed our affections. They will outlast death. Love is of God. Love is eternal. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a lair: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." 3. *But the spirit of the world.* Our Lord styled it "the evil"; St. John phrases it, "the lust of the world."

The maxims, the tone, the tendency of a life that shuts out God, ignores death, buries the thought of another life, the godlessness of the world—this is forbidden. The World's Final Court of Appeal is Opinion; the Christian's is God's Word. The one anxiously asks, "What will society say?" The other fearlessly asks, "What has God said?" "Will it be discovered? will shame follow?" that is one way of meeting a temptation. "Is it right?" that is the other, the more excellent, way.

II. Importance of a correct answer to the question, What is the forbidden world? A mistake here is fatal. 1. *Some have looked upon this world as accursed.* They have betaken themselves to monasteries and sisterhoods, oblivious of the fact that

> The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we ought to ask:
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To bring us daily nearer God.

2. *Some have supposed the evil to be in our business.* Here temptation arises; but the place where the fire breaks out is not the cause of the fire. To be unworldly does not mean to be out of the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." St. Paul did not give up tent-making, nor St. Peter relinquish fishing, when they became apostles. They taught their converts to "abide" in their callings. Business is not outside religion; it must be religiously attended to. The shop should be as sacred as a sanctuary. Work done with right motives and aims is a ceaseless litany. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Illustrations:—Let us use worldly things as wise pilgrims do their staves and other necessaries convenient for their journey. So long as they help us forward in our way, let us make use of them, and accordingly esteem them. But if they become troublesome hindrances and cumbersome burdens, let us leave them behind us or cast them away.—*Downame.*

All the water is waste that runs beside the mill; so all thy thoughts and words are waste which are not to the glory of God. A bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked; neither should the Christian engage in anything but for his soul's good and God's honour.—*Gurnall.*

Christianity allows us to use the world, provided we do not abuse it. It does not spread before us a delicious banquet, and then come with a "Touch not, taste not, handle not."—*Porteous.*

A Christian is like Jacob's ladder: while his body, that lower part, stands on the ground, the top, his higher and better part, is in heaven. He that hath the living waters of Jesus flowing in his heart, is mad if he stoop to the puddles of vanity, or seek content in the world. Yea, such a one will scarce descend to lawful pleasures, but for God's allowance and nature's necessity; and then but as the eagle, who lives aloft, and stoops not but for her prey.—*Adams.*

Moses.

x. 29. *Moses, the servant of God.*

Three periods of forty years:—agreeing with his life in Egypt, Arabia, and the wilderness of the wandering.

I. Birth and education. Tyranny and cowardice twin-sisters. Pharaoh enslaved the people. Unrighteous power is uncertain power. Pharaoh knew this. Dreading the increasing numbers of the children of Israel, he issued an edict that all the male children should be strangled at birth. Fearing political intrigue, he placed over them Egyptian task-masters. Anxious to crush their spirits, he increased their burdens. *Then Moses was born.* Jewish proverb says, "When the tale of bricks is doubled then comes Moses." "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." The story of the child's salvation. His mother his educator. Mother's influence. Augustine and Monica. The mother of the Wesleys. Cowper's poem on seeing his mother's picture. Boyhood of Moses not detailed. Nor childhood of Jesus. Two anecdotes in Stephen's speech. Flight now necessary.

II. Moses kept the flock in the desert near Horeb. Desert voices—

solitude and thought. Burning bush—a lesson to the eye; "My people are in the fire; they shall not be burned." Voice—a command and a commission. Reluctance. Moses and Aaron. Our dependence upon each other. Goes to Pharaoh.

III. His work. Eighty years of preparation. How God can wait! Our impatience if harvest ripens slowly. Moses became *deliverer*. Difficulties from Pharaoh; from people's accustomedness to bondage. Human sagacity and Divine help. The order of their march he indicated, but Hobab a guide. With the sagacity of a leader Moses united the courage of a warrior. He was the *patriarch and judge*. Difficulties he surmounted, and doubts he resolved. How he bore with them the history tells. His speech sometimes song. The *poet* of the nation. Passage of the Red Sea (Psalm xc.). Farewell (Deut. xxxii., xxxiii.). The scenes of this history have passed into proverbs. Our conceptions of the journey of a human soul from this land of exile to its home with God are borrowed from this narrative. Horeb, Sinai, and Nebo speak a language understood by thousands. The Red Sea, the city of palm trees, and the cleft rock have suggested thoughts of God which have inspired untold myriads in their pilgrimage. Such a history can never again be written. "A man of like passions." Penalty of passion. He was to see, but not to enter the land. Forty years he had toiled to bring them there, and now he must die outside. How many coveted objects get just within our reach, and then are removed as by invisible hands. A few lines sum up a human life. "Moses, the servant of the Lord." Few words, but 120 years in them—the victories and defeats, fears and hopes, temptations and resistances, dangers and deliverances of a lifetime. Moses died: God buried him. The people wept: Joshua arose. Moses died, but his work remained—remains. His life is ours to study. His laws are at the base of English and American jurisprudence; and he is with those who have gotten the victory, who stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and sing *the song of Moses, the servant of God*, and the song of the Lamb.

Illustrations:—"The life of Moses is probably the most complete of any man's, either in the Old Testament or the New—a great, noble, growing life to the very end, and most clearly and graphically depicted in the word of God. But not a single ray of light falls upon his death, and no man attends his funeral. We only know that it was well cared for; "the Lord buried him."—*Ker*.

Moses, pre-eminently one of the greatest men of all time. Coming from the lowest ranks of life,—born a slave under the iron tyranny of an Eastern despot,—he rose to become the emancipator of his people from that bondage, and the founder of a nation that held the light of heaven through the darkness of ages; and which, of all nations, has had the mightiest influence in advancing the true progress of the world.—*E. L. Hull*.

Voluntary Taxation.

x. 32—39. *We made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God*, &c.

The old law required the offerings; but it had been long unread. In the enthusiasm of the Reformation under Nehemiah they accepted the neglected law, and adapted it to their new conditions. Not to enter upon the thorny path of endowed or voluntary religion, nor to inquire whether tithes are coeval with the first man, and binding upon the present age, let us maintain—

I. That a Church supposes an edifice. "No particular sort of building, style of architecture, or ceremony of preparation is essential. An upper room in Jerusalem, the abode of the eleven, is the first-mentioned place of Christian consolation. The place of pentecostal concourse is not exactly mentioned, but is called a house. Afterwards the Christians met in the temple, probably for public worship; and celebrated the eucharist or broke the bread in the house. Perhaps

it was in the same place in which the eleven abode that the pentecostal assemblage was held, that the eucharistic bread was broken, that the deacons were installed, and that the apostolic council was held, and which was 'shaken' in answer to prayer."—*Manly.* God may be worshipped in any house. Experience has taught the convenience and value of *a house of God.* The edifice must be built and maintained.

II. That a Church requires a minister. "All elders are worthy of honour, the elders that rule well of double honour, the elders that labour in the word and doctrine of special honour. The honour consists of either obedience, or maintenance, or of both together. The labourer is worthy of his reward. No man can rightly labour in the word and doctrine without diligent and habitual biblical study; no man can conduct such study without the renunciation of secular pursuits; no man can abandon such pursuits without an adequate and guaranteed salary from the Church in which he teaches and for which he labours; and accordingly it is a wise arrangement, an equitable exchange, a Divine direction, that the bishops or ministers of the churches should be adequately sustained and paid. An unpaid ministry must always be an occasional and defective ministry; and a Church that relies on it will droop and decline. It is simple justice; and it is God's law that he who is taught in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things."—*Manly.* The ministry must be sustained.

III. That a Church is a brotherhood. "The rich and poor meet together." "The poor ye have always with you." In a Church sense, "if any provide not for his own house he hath denied the faith." "All ye are brethren."

IV. That a Church is a missionary organization. It has duties both at home and abroad. The word of God must be translated, the masses evangelized, society leavened. This is the only "needs-be" for a Church. It gets to give; exists for what it does. A praying Church must also be a working Church. A working Church must of necessity be a generous Church. *Jesus stood over against the treasury and saw the rich men casting in their gifts. And he saw also a certain widow casting in the two mites.* "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." "God loveth the cheerful giver."

Illustration:—Men may say they prefer to give their missionary money nearer home, where they see what becomes of it. But remember that it is by setting up standards and beacons, getting hold of a few here and there and Christianizing them, even when results look small, that a great testimony to Christ is finally given. Make the gospel "witness to all nations," before the end comes. The apostles travelled and sailed, casting their bread upon the waters, not too anxious to count up visible results. The great commission was, "Go, preach the gospel to all nations." There is no knowing where the fruit will spring —*Bishop Huntington.*

Zeal for the Sanctuary.

x. 39. *We will not forsake the house of our God.*

Israel ordained the guardians of God's spiritual worship, and the repositories of his lively oracles. So long as they kept oracles undefiled and maintained worship undebased God was with them; when they profaned or abandoned the place where his honour dwelt—defiling his worship with superstition and idolatry—he turned to be their adversary. He gave up their city to destruction, and their beautiful house, where their fathers had praised him, to utter desolation. They were carried away captive into Babylon. After seventy years of tribulation, God hearkened to their cries. He caused Cyrus to issue a decree of return. Multitudes hastened back. Having rebuilt the temple they kept a solemn festival. They made confessions, and renewed their covenant with God. They bound themselves to restore the tithes and sacrifices which the law ordained. Though impoverished

and oppressed they undertook to give such things as were needful for the full service of the temple. The whole assembly, in unison with their governor, protested with one mind and one mouth, WE WILL NOT FORSAKE THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD.

Why you should say of "the habitation of God's house," we will not forsake it?

1. *God has clearly ordained public worship.* He made man to be social—social in virtue of his sorrows, his joys, his wants, his affections, his relationships. But if he formed men to be social in things natural, he no less formed them to be social in things spiritual. The isolation of selfishness is of sin; the union of love is of God. But union is cherished by communion, and communion strengthened by united worship. The faithful ought therefore to assemble themselves together in their Master's name. Accordingly, fellowship in worship may be traced from the earliest period. It seems not improbable that, as our great poet has represented, even in paradise the primitive pair had some chosen bower whither they resorted to offer up their stated homage to their Maker. But be that as it may, no sooner do we find men calling upon the Lord after the fall, than we find them calling upon him in fellowship. Where the patriarch pitched his tent, there he built his altar. As soon as ever God had singled out a people for himself, he bade them raise a tabernacle of witness and of worship, giving the minutest instructions for its construction, its furniture, and its ordinances. He added this memorable promise, which remains in all its force, "Wherever I record my name I will come to thee and bless thee." And gloriously did he record his name—first in the tabernacle, and afterwards more gloriously still in the temple. He dwelt between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat, and poured his blessing on all who truly sought him there. Jesus honoured the temple. He loved to resort to his Father's house. He was very jealous of its desecration; the zeal of it ate him up. There he was wont to teach; there he wrought mighty miracles. His disciples met for worship, sometimes in the synagogue, sometimes in the upper chamber, sometimes at the river-side: and no sooner did opportunity serve than they set apart holy places for the ordinances and worship of God. The faithful in every age have desired to dwell in the house of the Lord. If, therefore, any man have the mind of the Spirit; if he love the Saviour and those whom the Saviour loves—he cannot but say of the solemn assembly, "I will not forsake the house of my God."

2. *The special manifestations of the Divine presence, vouchsafed in the congregations of the saints, ought to endear to us such privileged scenes.* Never has the promise failed, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." His chosen have sought and seen his "power and glory in the sanctuary." The history of the Church in all ages is rich in the illustration of this fact. The patriarchal altar was many a time illumined from on high. The cloud of glory often rested on the tabernacle of witness. The mystic splendour which shone between the wings of the cherubim, reflecting a radiance on the mercy-seat—that symbol of the propitiation of Jesus—testified that "God dwelt with man on the earth,"—that "his dwelling-place was in Zion. There, by voices and by visions, by Urim and Thummim," and by secret communications of his grace, he revealed himself to his people. And now—what though the temple with its magnificent ceremonial and impressive ordinances has passed away—what though no visible Shekinah irradiates the simple house of prayer—have we no signs, no tokens left? Have we not the substance instead of the shadow? the spirit in lieu of the letter? If the carnal worshipper sees less—does not the spiritual worshipper see more—abundant glory? "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." Are there not still memorials of a present Lord amongst us—memorials sublimely simple, exquisitely expressive?—his blessed gospel—his living sacraments—the preaching of his word? Neither are there lacking demonstrations of his power and love. True it is that they who come not in faith find him not here; but those

who come believingly hear a voice the unbelieving do not hear—feel a presence the unbelieving do not feel—enjoy a blessing the unbelieving cannot receive. If, then, God manifests himself surpassingly in the sanctuary; if he has never failed to bestow his special favour towards the social services of his children, it follows that they who love the Lord and love to meet him cannot but say, "We will not forsake the house of our God."

3. *As the sanctuary has been the place of the Lord's rest, so has it been the scene where he has imparted the richest gifts to his worshippers.* On the day of Pentecost, it was "when they were all with one accord in one place," that "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a of rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Examine the history of the Church ever since, and you will find that of the multitudes of the believing, the largest proportion have been born for eternity in the house of God. If not begotten in the sanctuary, the saints have at least been nursed and nourished there. Many a time has the devout worshipper entered the sanctuary in darkness, and left it full of light; entered sorely beset with temptations, returned from it with the snare of the fowler broken; come perplexed, departed assured; come burdened, gone back enlarged; come prostrate, gone back exalted; come mourning, returned rejoicing; come cold, gone back enkindled; come secularized, gone back spiritualized; come weary, gone back revived; come earthly-minded, gone back heavenly-minded.

4. *The servant of God will love the courts of the Lord and not forsake them, because in them he tastes most of heaven below.* You cannot form a better conception of heaven than by fixing on the happiest Sabbath, and the happiest hour of worship on the happiest Sabbath, you ever enjoyed in the assembly of the saints. Then and there, withdrawn from the world's vanities and disquietudes; then and there, abstracted from things seen and temporal, and absorbed in things unseen and eternal; then and there, when all was tranquillity without, and all was calm within; then and there, faith almost turned into sight and hope into fruition—all earthly distinctions forgotten, the poor and the rich blended in fellowship and love, the whole assembly worshipping in unison, like many instruments all true to one key-note; then and there, you had a miniature of heaven, you reached the very vestibule of that temple not made with hands, where congregations never break up, and Sabbaths never end. He then who loves not such scenes on earth—how could he love the heavenly habitation of holiness? He who has no taste for the communion and the songs of the saints below, how would he weary of the ceaseless thanksgiving and the eternal communion of the glorified in immortality! Of all men, the busy, harassed, weary mercantile man—forced to plunge daily into the dust and din of the world's mart—is the very man who most requires the refreshment and savour of the sanctuary. A Sunday passed in worship has an influence on the days of toil. Many are witnesses that, when on the evening of the stated service which forms the half-way well in the week, they have gone up to the house of the Lord, rich has been the return of blessing and comfort. These services interrupt the current of earthly care, and suspend for a little the play of the overwrought machinery of the mind. Alas! with what punctuality do many frequent the counting-house who are seldom seen in the solemn assembly! What numbers who never think of contenting themselves with a single visit to the warehouse on the Monday, yet content themselves with a solitary attendance at church on the Sunday. What numbers are all alive and alert in the exchange, who are sluggish and uninterested in waiting on God—as though the toys and shadows of time and earth surpassed in magnitude and moment the illimitable realities of immortality.—*Canon Stowell; abridged.*

ZEAL FOR GOD'S HOUSE, EXPRESSED IN A HOLY RESOLUTION NOT TO FORSAKE IT.

x. 39. *And we will not forsake the house of our God.*

INTRODUCTION. Consider these words as they relate to the Jews at that time. The house of God was once the tabernacle, after that the temple. Tabernacle was forsaken: temple destroyed: worshippers carried away into captivity.

I. A resolution well becoming Christians themselves. "We will not forsake the house of our God." The same zeal and affection which this people expressed to the temple, should be manifested by us to the Church and ordinances of Christ. The material temple was the centre of their unity. Under the gospel there is no such house, unto which all are obliged to repair, and any parts of divine worship are confined. Our house not a material building of wood and stones, of silver and gold, and cedar work; but a mystical building, a spiritual house, whose maker is the living God, and whose materials are living stones: whose house are we. By this house I mean the Church of God, as it is composed of the faithful in all ages and places of the world; comprehending his worship and ordinances, with all the concerns of his kingdom, and interests among men. This is that house which we should resolve never to forsake. There is doubtless much more intended than is expressed in such forms of speech, and in its full extent this resolution comprehends the three following particulars:—

1. *That we will never cast off the profession of our faith, nor make a defection from the truths and ways of the gospel, for any cause nor upon any account whatsoever.* It's so rare a thing for a nation to change their gods (though really no gods) that the prophet challenges his people to produce a single instance of its being ever done—Hath a nation changed their gods? But to the everlasting reproach of Israel, they had changed their glory for that which did not profit. They that were the only people under heaven who had no cause to change their God, were of all others the people that had done it. Now it's this defection from the true God and his worship which this people covenanted against.

2. *That we will not neglect the ordinances of Divine worship, nor be wanting in our attendance on them whenever we are called, and have an opportunity of appearing before God in his house.* Thus much is contained in this resolution of these devout and reforming Jews. And the same should be our resolution with respect to the house and worship of God under the gospel; we certainly are under no less obligations to frequent Christian assemblies and keep up public worship than they were; we stand in as much need of these helps and advantages as they did. *Jesus Christ, as lord of his own house, has appointed divers ordinances to be observed. There must be an assembly of people meeting together for the public administration of these holy ordinances. There must be some proper and convenient places appointed and agreed upon for such religious assemblies where they can be had.* Some have learned to condemn all assemblies but their own, and every way of worship but what agrees with theirs. I shall leave it to every man's conscience where (according to the best light he can get) he thinks himself obliged ordinarily to worship God. *There are particular times and seasons for the holding these religious assemblies.* Reason tells us, if God is to be worshipped there must be a set time for it. Which day of the week is designed, and ought to be observed, for this stated worship is not agreed among all those that yet are heartily affected to the worship of God itself. Seventh day? First day? *There are certain persons, whose work and duty it is to go before others in these holy administrations* Who they are that have this authority I list not now to contend. Some have

the charity as well as modesty to nullify all administrations besides their own.

3. *That we will promote as far as in us lies the interests of religion, and spread the kingdom of Christ in the world.* It's not the good of this or that particular Church and society only, but the whole interest of Christ as opposed to the devil's kingdom in the world, whose welfare and prosperity we are bound to seek.

II. It is not only lawful, but may be useful and expedient, for Christians in societies to engage themselves to God, and the duties they owe to him and one another. This people agreed together as one man, and bound themselves by a solemn covenant, which was written and subscribed, sealed and sworn to, that they would never forsake the house of the Lord their God. What I would gather from this instance is, that as this people did, Christians may voluntarily agree together, and engage themselves in particular societies to carry on a work for God in such a way as is warranted by his word, and judged by themselves most likely to promote some valuable end. I shall,

III. Offer reasons both for making this resolution and obliging ourselves to make it good. 1. *Because it is God's house.* Everything that is his should be sacred and dear to us. It is his house we are to frequent; they are his ordinances on which we attend. His word is preached and heard. His interest we oblige ourselves to support. They carry his image and superscription; this gives them their worth and value. (1) To forsake God's house would be to forsake our own mercies, and deprive ourselves of the most valuable blessing in the whole world. *In God's house we are sure to meet with the truest pleasure and satisfaction. They that come crowding to God's house, shall be sent away rejoicing to their own, with the greatest benefit and advantage.* Here we may hope to have our doubts resolved, our darkness scattered, and temptations most effectually vanquished. *With that which will prove the firmest and most effectual support to us under all the troubles of life and at the near approach of death.* (2) To leave this house is to forsake the place which God himself hath chosen, and where he delights to dwell. He loveth the gates of Zion. Is it not good for us to be near to God? Has he said, Here will I dwell?—and should not we for that reason say, Here will we dwell? (3) To forsake this house is to forsake God himself. We cannot quit the inheritance of the Lord but in effect we go and serve other gods. To what houses will they resort that have once forsaken God's house? With what company will they associate, and in what assemblies may we expect to find those that have renounced the communion of saints? 2. *Because our particular good is lodged in the public interest.* In seeking this we seek ourselves. At the same time that we discharge our duty we consult our interests. No service performed to Christ shall lose its reward. No man shall kindle a fire on God's altar, or shut a door in his house, for nought. It is then likely to go well with our own houses when due care is taken that it may go well with God's house. 3. *This is the noblest way of imitating the great God himself, and conforming to the example of our blessed Saviour.* Thou art good, O Lord, and thou doest good. To be like God is our truest glory, and should be our highest ambition. Herein also we imitate the shining example of Jesus Christ. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." His anger at the profanation of the temple rose up to an holy indignation. 4. *This makes men real blessings to the world.* However they may be esteemed by others, they really are the strength and security of a nation; the stay and support of the public interest: they bear up the pillars of the earth, and keep it from being quite dissolved. For their sakes God sometimes preserves others from those judgments which their crying sins would otherwise pull down upon their guilty heads. Sodom had been preserved for the sake of ten righteous persons, could so many have been found in the place. 5. *This will be our rejoicing and comfort another day. Having*

made this resolution we must oblige ourselves to make it good. Because of the deceitfulness and inconstancy of our hearts. Such engagements will help to fix us more firmly in the interests of religion, and make us more successful in resisting all temptations to apostasy. Hereby we are rendered more capable of serving the interests of religion. A force when united becomes the stronger. The joint concurrence of many give a great advantage to a design, and a better prospect of success.—*Matthew Clarke* 1715; *abridged.*

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER X.

TITHES.

Without inquiring into the reason for which the number ten has been so frequently preferred as a number of selection in the cases of tribute offerings, both sacred and secular, voluntary and compulsory, we may remark that numerous instances of its use are found both in profane and also in Biblical history, prior to, or independently of, the appointment of the Levitical tithes under the law. In Biblical history the two prominent instances are—1. Abram presenting the tenth of all his property, according to the Syrian and Arabic versions of Heb. vii., but as the passages themselves appear to show, of the spoils of his victory, to Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 20; Heb. vii. 2, 6). 2. Jacob, after his vision at Luz, devoting a tenth of all his property to God in case he should return home in safety (Gen. xxviii. 22). These instances bear witness to the antiquity of tithes, in some shape or other, previous to the Mosaic tithe system. But numerous instances are to be found of the practice of heathen nations, Greeks, Romans, Carthaginians, Arabians, of applying tenths derived from property in general, from spoil, from confiscated goods, or from commercial profits, to sacred, and quasi-sacred, and also to fiscal, purposes, viz. as consecrated to a deity, presented as a reward to a successful general, set apart as a tribute to a sovereign, or as a permanent source of revenue. . . . .

The first enactment of the law in respect of tithes is the declaration that the tenth of all produce, as well as of flocks and cattle, belongs to Jehovah, and must be offered to him. 2. That the tithe was to be paid in kind, or, if redeemed, with an addition of one-fifth to its value (Lev. xxvii. 30—33). This tenth is ordered to be assigned to the Levites, as the reward of their service, and it is ordered further, that they are themselves to dedicate to the Lord a tenth of these receipts, which is to be devoted to the maintenance of the high priest (Num. xviii. 21—28).

This legislation is modified or extended in the Book of Deuteronomy, *i.e.* from thirty-eight to forty years later. Commands are given to the people—1. To bring their tithes, together with their votive and other offerings and first-fruits, to the chosen centre of worship, the metropolis, there to be eaten in festive celebration, in company with their children, their servants, and the Levites (Deut. xii. 5—18). 2. After warnings against idolatrous, or virtually idolatrous, practices, and the definition of clean as distinguished from unclean animals, among which latter class the swine is of obvious importance in reference to the subject of tithes, the legislator proceeds to direct that all the produce of the soil shall be tithed every year (ver. 17 seems to show that corn, wine, and oil, alone are intended), and that these tithes, with the firstlings of the flock and herd, are to be eaten in the metropolis. 3. But in case of distance, permission is given to convert the produce into money, which is to be taken to the appointed place, and there laid out in the purchase of food for a festal celebration, in which the Levite is, by

special command, to be included (Deut. xiv. 22—27). 4. Then follows the direction, that at the end of three years, *i.e.* in the course of the third and sixth years of the Sabbatical period, all the tithe of that year is to be gathered and laid up "within the gates," *i.e.* probably in some central place in each district, not at the metropolis; and that a festival is to be held, in which the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, together with the Levite, are to partake. 5. Lastly, it is ordered that after taking the tithe in each third year, "which is the year of tithing," an exculpatory declaration is to be made by every Israelite that he has done his best to fulfil the Divine command (Deut. xxvi. 12—14). From all this we gather—1. That one-tenth of the whole produce of the soil was to be assigned for the maintenance of the Levites. 2. That out of this the Levites were to dedicate a tenth to God, for the use of the high priest. 3. That a tithe, in all probability a *second* tithe, was to be applied to festival purposes. 4. That in every third year, either this festival tithe or a *third* tenth was to be eaten in company with the poor and the Levites. . . .

Ewald thinks that under the kings the ecclesiastical tithe system reverted to what he supposes to have been its original free-will character. It is plain that during that period the tithe system partook of the general neglect into which the observance of the law declined, and that Hezekiah, among his other reforms, took effectual means to revive its use (2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 12, 19). Similar measures were taken after the Captivity by Nehemiah (Neh. xii. 44), and in both these cases special officers were appointed to take charge of the stores and store-houses for the purpose. The practice of tithing especially for relief of the poor appears to have subsisted even in Israel, for the prophet Amos speaks of it, though in an ironical tone, as existing in his day (Amos iv. 4). But as any degeneracy in the national faith would be likely to have an effect on the tithe-system, we find complaint of neglect in this respect made by the prophet Malachi (iii. 8, 10.) Yet, notwithstanding partial evasion or omission, the system itself was continued to a late period in Jewish history, and was even carried to excess by those who, like the Pharisees, affected peculiar exactness in observance of the law (Heb. vii. 5, 8; Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xviii. 12). Among details relating to the tithe payments mentioned by Rabbinical writers may be noticed: (1) That in reference to the permission given in case of distance (Deut. xiv. 24), Jews dwelling in Babylonia, Ammon, Moab, and Egypt, were considered as subject to the law of tithe in kind. (2) In tithing sheep the custom was to enclose them in a pen, and as the sheep went out at the opening, every tenth animal was marked with a rod dipped in vermilion. This was "the passing under the rod." The law ordered that no inquiry should be made whether the animal were good or bad, and that if the owner changed it, both the original and the changeling were to be regarded as devoted (Lev. xxvii. 32, 33; Jer. xxxiii. 13). (3) Cattle were tithed in and after August, corn in and after September, fruits of trees in and after January. (4) "Corners" were exempt from tithe. (5) The general rule was, that all edible articles not purchased were titheable, but that products not specified in Deut. xiv. 23 were regarded as doubtful. Tithe of them was not forbidden, but was not required.—*Rev. H. W. Phillot, M.A., in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary.'*

Sentences from Old Writers.

Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah the Tirshatha.—"He is first mentioned, not as a priest, but as a provost; and one that held it an honour to be first in so good a matter. The life of the prince is the load-star of the people, upon which most men fix their eyes and shape their courses. Great men draw many by their examples; they are as looking-glasses by which others dress

themselves. And hence Nehemiah's forwardness here to seal first." "Those that are above others in dignity and power should go before them in the way of God." *The priests.*—"They that lead in prayers should lead in every other good work." *The chief of the people.*—"Great men never look so great as when they encourage religion." "They that have interest must use it for God." *All they that had separated themselves.*—"In St. Paul's sense 'come out from among them;' from such stand off; stand up from the dead; save yourselves from this untoward generation; shun their sins, lest ye share in their plagues. These holy separates, or proselytes, sealed the covenant, and became free denizens of the commonwealth of Israel." *Entered into a curse.*—"The more to confirm the oath, and to keep their deceitful hearts close to God." "If he that firmly purposeth often faileth, what shall he do that seldom purposeth any thing, or with little resolvedness?" *To walk in God's law.*—"To walk accurately and exactly by line and by rule in all the commandments so far as God should assist them. The bowls of the candlestick have no oil but what droppeth from the olive branches. Condition with the Lord for his strength and grace." *That they would not intermarry.*—"In our covenants with God we should engage particularly against those sins that we have been most frequently overtaken in and damaged by. They that resolve to keep the commandments of God must say to evil doers, Depart." "By the rib, as by a ladder, Satan oft climbs to the heart and corrupts it." "Every man when he marrieth, brings either a good or an evil spirit into his house, and so make it either a heaven or a hell." *If the people of the land bring ware on the Sabbath day,* &c.—"The Sabbath is a market day for our souls." *And the exaction of every debt we would leave.*—"Those are stubborn children indeed that will not mend the fault which they have been particularly corrected for." *Also we made ordinances for us.*—"Having covenanted against the sins they had been guilty of, they proceed in obliging themselves to revive and observe the duties they had neglected. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well." *The temple service.*—"Let not any people expect the blessing of God unless they make conscience of observing his ordinances." *The third part of a shekel.*—"Thankfulness is measured, both by God and good men, not by the weight, but by the will, of the retributor. God doth highly accept the small offerings of his weak servants when he seeth them to proceed from great love." *The wood offering.*—"They provided the fire and the wood as well as the lambs for a burnt-offering." *The first-fruits.*—"God required to be honoured with the first-lings of all; to show how he sets by our young services." *To bring to the house of our God unto the priests.*—"No man might offer his own sacrifice, though it were never so good, but present it to the priest, who was to offer as well the poor man's lamb as the rich man's ox."

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] "This chapter is intimately connected with chapter vii. 4, showing Nehemiah's plan of increasing the population of the city. The genealogies and then the confession and covenant come in parenthetically—the former as part of the process in the plan, and the latter as chronologically happening while Nehemiah was maturing the plan."—*Crosby.* 1.] "The first sentence, ver. 1, 'And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem,' cannot be so closely connected with the next, 'And the rest of the people cast lots,' &c, as to place the rulers in direct contrast to the rest of the people, but must be understood by its retrospect to vii. 4, which gives the following contrast: The rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem, but few of the people dwelt there: to this is joined the

next sentence: 'And the rest of the people cast lots.' The rest of the people' does not mean the assembled people with the exception of the rulers, but the people with the exception of the few who dwelt at Jerusalem. These cast lots to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem."—*Keil.* **The holy city**] "The predicate, the holy city, occurs here and ver. 18 for the first time. Jerusalem is so called, on the ground of the prophecies (Joel iii. 17 and Isa. xlviii. 2), because the sanctuary of God, the temple, was there."—*Keil.* 3. **The chief of the province**] *i. e.* Judea. "Nehemiah speaks of it as it then was, a small appendix of the present empire"—*Jamieson.* **Israel**] "This general name, which designated the descendants of Jacob, before the unhappy division of the two kingdoms under Rehoboam, was restored after the captivity, the Israelites being then united with the Jews, and all traces of their former separation being obliterated. Although the majority of the returned exiles belonged to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, they are here called Israel; because a large number out of all the tribes were now intermingled, and these were principally the occupiers of the rural villages, while none but those of Judah and Benjamin resided in Jerusalem."—*Jamieson.* 11. **The ruler of the house of God**] "Assistant of the high priest (Num. iii. 32; 1 Chron. ix. 11; 2 Chron. xix. 11)."—*Jamieson.* 16. **The oversight of the outward business of the house of God**] Building, furniture, and things necessary for temple worship. 17. **The principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer**] The precentor. 23. **It was the king's commandment**] The king is not David, but the Persian king Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. 12, *seq.*). 24. **Pethahiah . . . was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people**] "This can scarcely be understood of a royal commissioner at Jerusalem, but certainly designates an official transacting the affairs of the Jewish community at the hand of the king, at his court."—*Keil.* 25—36.] "The heads, who with their houses inhabited country districts, are here no longer enumerated, but only the towns, with their adjacent neighbourhoods, which were inhabited by Jews and Benjamites; and even these are but summarily mentioned." —*Keil.* 36. **Of the Levites**, &c.]—"Rather for the Levites, *i. e.* those who were not resident in Jerusalem were distributed in settlements throughout the provinces of Judah and Benjamin."—*Jamieson.*

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER XI.

Ver.	1—19.	The Holy City Replenished.	Ver.	20—23.	The Service of Song in the House of the Lord.
,,	1.	The Holy City.			
,,	16.	The Secular in Sacred Service.			

The Holy City Replenished.

Ch. xi. 1—19. *And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city,* &c.

Jerusalem is called here the holy city, because there the temple was, and that was the place God had chosen to put his name there. Upon this account one would think the holy seed should all have chosen to dwell there. They declined, however. Either—1. *Because a greater strictness of conversation was expected from the inhabitants of Jerusalem than from others, which they were not willing to come up to.* Those who care not for being holy themselves are shy of dwelling in a holy city. They would not dwell in the New Jerusalem itself for that reason, but would wish to have a continuing city here on earth. Or—2. *Because Jerusalem, of all places, was most hated by the heathen, their neighbours, and against it their malicious designs were levelled, which made that the post of danger, as the post of honour uses to be, and therefore they were not willing to expose themselves there.* Fear of persecution and reproach, and running themselves into trouble, keeps many out of the holy city, and makes them backward to appear for God and religion; not considering that as Jerusalem is with a special malice threatened and insulted by its enemies, so it is with special care protected by its God, and made a quiet habitation. Or—3. *Because it was more for their worldly advantage to dwell in the country.* Jerusalem was no trading city, and therefore there was no money to be got there by merchandises, as there was in the country by corn and cattle. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." It is a general and just complaint, that most people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease, and safety before the glory of God and the public good. People being thus backward to dwell at Jerusalem now it was poor, we are here told—

I. By what means it was replenished. 1. *The rulers dwelt there.* That was the proper place for them to reside in, because there were set the thrones of judgment, and thither in all difficult matters the people resorted with their last appeals. And if it were an instance of eminent affection to the house of God, zeal for the public good, and of faith, and holy courage, and self-denial, to dwell there at this time, the rulers would be examples of these to their inferiors. Their dwelling there would invite and encourage others to dwell there too: "the mighty are magnetic." When great men would choose the holy city for their habitation, it brings holiness into reputation, and their zeal will provoke very many. 2. *There were some that "willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem," bravely postponing their own secular interest to the public welfare.* It is upon record, to their honour, that when others were shy of venturing upon difficulty, loss, and danger they sought the good of Jerusalem, because of the house of the Lord their God: they shall prosper that thus love Zion. It is said the people blessed them. They praised them, they prayed for them, they praised God for them. Many that do not appear forward themselves for the public good will yet give a good word to those that do. God and man will bless those that are public blessings, which should encourage us to be zealous in doing good. 3. *They, finding that yet there was room, concluded, upon a review of their whole body, to bring one in ten to dwell in Jerusalem; and who they should be was determined by lot, the disposal whereof all knew was of the Lord.* This would prevent strife, and would be a great satisfaction to those on whom the lot fell to dwell at Jerusalem, that they plainly saw God appointing the bounds of their habitations. The proportion they observed of one in ten, as we may suppose it to bring the balance between the city and country to a just and equal poise, so it seems to refer to the ancient rule of giving the tenth to God. And what is given to the holy city he reckons given to himself.

II. By what persons it was replenished. A general account is here given of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because the governors of Judah looked upon them as their strength in the Lord of Hosts their God, and valued them accordingly (Zech. xii. 5). 1. *Many of the children of Judah and Benjamin dwelt there.* Originally part of the city lay in the lot of one of those tribes and part in that of the other; but the greater part was in the lot of Benjamin; hence more families of that tribe abode in the city. Those of Judah all descended from Perez or Pharez, that son of Judah "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." The men of Judah were valiant men, fit for service, and able to defend the city in case of an attack. Judah has not lost its ancient character of a lion's whelp—bold and daring. Of the Benjamites that dwell in Jerusalem we are here told who was overseer and who his second (ver. 9); for it is as necessary for a people to have good order kept up among themselves as to be fortified against the attacks of their enemies from abroad,—to have good magistrates as to have good soldiers. 2. *The priests and Levites did many of them settle at Jerusalem.* Where else should men that were holy to God dwell but in the holy city? *Most of the priests* we may suppose dwelt there; for their business lay where the temple was. It is well those labourers were not few (vers. 12—14). It was said of some of them that they were mighty men of valour (ver. 14); and so they had need, for the priesthood was not only a work which required might, but a warfare which required valour especially now. Of one of these priests it is said he was "the son of one of the great men," and it was no disparagement to the greatest man they had to have his son in the priesthood; he might magnify his office, for his office did not in the least diminish him. *Some of the Levites* also came and dwelt at Jerusalem; yet but few in comparison. Much of their work was to teach the good knowledge of God up and down the country, for which purpose they were to be scattered in Israel. As many as there was occasion for attended at Jerusalem; the rest were doing good elsewhere.—*Matthew Henry.*

The Holy City.

xi. 1. *Jerusalem the holy city.*

A sacred temple and a holy city—aids to faith in history of chosen people. Consecrated worshippers befit consecrated place.

I. The sacred city. *Names.*—Jerusalem, "the foundation of peace;" Ariel, "the unconquerable;" or, as others, "the hearth of God," *i. e.* the sacred hearth on which the unquenched fire burnt. "The Holy City." As here. In later Arabic names. In Matthew's Gospel. *Central position.*—"I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations and countries round about her" (Ezek. v. 5). In Hereford Cathedral there is a map of the world with Jerusalem as literal centre. "The world is like to an eye; the white of the eye is the ocean surrounding the world; the black is the world itself; the pupil is Jerusalem, and the image in the pupil, the temple." — *Rabbins.* Central to the people of the country. The mother-city. The seat of government. The home of the priests. "Thither the tribes go up." Its "*elevation*," says Dean Stanley, "is remarkable; occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table lands of the country. To the traveller approaching the city from the east or west it must always have presented the appearance beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may say beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of Jordan, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness." *An impregnable city.* Ravines and mountains. Natural position accounts for compactness. Hence Scripture references to the Mount of God; the kings are higher than the kings of the earth; the mountains are round about Jerusalem; Zion stands for ever.

Illustrations: "I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her." "In later times this passage was taken in the literal sense that Palestine, and Jerusalem especially, was actually the centre of the earth; a belief of which the memorial is yet preserved in the large round stones still kissed devoutly by Greek pilgrims, in their portion of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is one of the many instances in which the innocent fancy of an earlier faith has been set aside by the discoveries of later science. In the East probably there are still many points of this kind which have been long surrendered in the more stirring West. But there was a real truth in it at the time that the prophet wrote, which the subsequent course of history makes it now difficult for us to realize. Palestine, though now at the very outskirts of that tide of civilization, which has swept far into the remotest West, was then the vanguard of the Eastern, and therefore, of the civilized world; and, moreover, stood midway between the two great seats of ancient empire, Babylon and Egypt. It was on the high road from one to the other of these mighty powers, the prize for which they contended, the battlefield on which they fought, the lofty bridge over which they ascended and descended respectively into the deep basins of the Nile and Euphrates."—*Stanley.*

"Upon the broad and elevated promontory within the fork of the valleys of Jehoshaphat and Hinnom, lies the Holy City. All around are higher hills; on the east, the Mount of Olives; on the south, the Hill of Evil Counsel, so called, rising directly from the vale of Hinnom; on the west, the ground rises gently, to the borders of the Great Wady; while on the north, a bend of the ridge connected with the Mount of Olives bounds the prospect at the distance of more than a mile. Towards the S.W. the view is somewhat more open; for here lies the plain of Rephaim, commencing just at the southern brink of the valley of Hinnom, and stretching off S.W., where it runs to the western sea. In the N.W. too the eye reaches up along the upper part of the valley of Jehoshaphat, and from many points can discern the mosque of *Neby Samwil*, situated on a lofty ridge beyond the great Wady, at the distance of two hours."—*Robinson.*

The Mount of Olives overtops even the highest part of the city by rather more than 100 feet, and the Temple Hill by no less than 300. Its northern and southern outliers—the Viri Galilæi, Scopus, and Mount of Offence—bend round slightly towards the City, and give the effect of standing round about Jerusalem. Especially would this be the case to a worshipper in the temple."—*Grove.*

II. The sacred city a sacred symbol. "The Holy City." "The City of our

God." What is the all-time significance? A consecrated commonwealth. City and temple sacred. Festivals and fast-days, working-days and worshipping-days—all God's. "Her merchandise shall be holiness to the Lord." "There shall not a hoof be left behind." On all things look for the image and superscription of God. Will the City of Vision descend? Or shall we ascend to it? The city lieth four square. Its twelve gates are open continually. It has no temple. There is no sacred spot because the city is the Lord's; and all it contains. Bernard sings of "Jerusalem the golden."

Illustrations: "Narrow as are its boundaries, we have all a share in the possession. What a church is to a city "Palestine is to the world." —*'Crescent and the Cross.'*

"Not only has the long course of ages invested the prospects and scenes of the Holy Land with poetical and moral associations, but these scenes accommodate themselves to such parabolical adaptation with singular facility . . . . The passage of the Red Sea — the murmurings at the 'waters of strife'—the 'wilderness' of life —the 'Rock of Ages, Mount Sinai and its terrors—the view from Pisgah—the passage of the Jordan—the rock of Zion, the fountain of Siloa, and the shades of Gehenna—the lake of Gennesareth, with its storms, its waves, and its fishermen—are well-known instances in which the local features of the Holy Lands have naturally become the household imagery of Christendom." —*Stanley.*

"The Gospel Church is called *Jerusalem*: in her is the peculiar presence of God; in her the tribes of holy men meet and serve him. O how beautiful and compact her form!—how firm her foundation!—how strongly fortified and protected, by the laws, perfections, and providences of God!—how rich, wealthy, and free her true members!—how readily they welcome others to reside with them! The heavenly state of glory is called *Jerusalem*, or the *new Jerusalem*."—*Wood.*

The Secular in Sacred Service.

xi. 16. *The outward business of the house of God.*

Outward and inward—a law of life as of temple service. In the temple of this world some of us must have the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. "The priests were chief managers of the business within the temple gates, but this Levite was intrusted with the secular concerns of God's house, that were 'subservient to its spiritual concerns;' the collecting of the contributions, the providing of materials for the temple service, and the like, which it was necessary to oversee, else the inward business would have been starved and stood still. Those that take care of 'the outward concerns' of the Church, the serving of its tables, are as necessary in their place as those that take care of 'its inward concerns,' who give themselves to the word and prayer."—*Matthew Henry.*

I. **It is possible to secularise the sacred.** When sacred service is entered upon from secular motives; when it is performed in a perfunctory manner; when any object less than God is regarded in its performance, we must needs pray for the forgiveness of the iniquity of our holy things. Eli's sons were in the tabernacle. Priests of all religions have worshipped at an altar desecrated by their presence. An unhallowed hand may not bear up an ark. The grimmest pages of history are associated with holy service marred by unholy ambitions — by envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. A cowl does not make a monk. High office cannot elevate a base man.

"The churl in spirit howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons through the gilded pale:
For who can always act? but he,
To whom a thousand memories call,
Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seemed to be."

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

II. **It is necessary to make the secular sacred.** "He can who thinks he can." Paul's application of the old fable in 1 Cor. xii. 14—26, "I had rather be a doorkeeper," &c. The Christian members of one of our religious communities annually covenant with God thus—"Make me what thou wilt, Lord, and set me where thou wilt; let

me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone, so I be a vessel of honour; of whatsoever form or metal, whether higher or lower, finer or coarser, I am content. If I be not the head, or the eye, or the ear, one of the nobler and more honourable instruments thou wilt employ; let me be the hand or the foot, one of the most laborious, and lowest, and most contemptible, of all the servants of my Lord." Application. 1. *The secret of contentment.* "Self-humiliation is full of truth and reality." The hidden life more secure than the outer life. Circumstances change, character is permanent. Look within. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," &c. 2. *The law of growth.* Develope thyself. "To be," differs from "to have." Be thy ambition to become pure in thought and feeling, strong in resolve and deed. Serve. Care not how, mind not where. "Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these, my brethren," &c. And we may add—and inasmuch as ye have rendered *the least service* to the least of these, my brethren, ye have rendered it unto me. But, like the angels, let us serve our brethren "all for love, and nothing for reward."

The Service of Song in the House of the Lord.

xi. 22, 23. *Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.*

Music is the hand-maid of religion. Were we treating of music in general, and not of it in relation to religious life, we must treat of the science of music as developed in the East and West, as it has been affected in Catholic countries, and influenced by the Reformation. But our text-book is the Bible. The theme is the service of song in the house of the Lord. Music in the sanctuary is the music of the Hebrews, as it has come down to, and been developed in, the Christian Church.

Those who have deeply studied this subject inform us that the science of music amongst the Hebrews is only conjectural. But the practice of music meets us on almost every page of Hebrew history. In Gen. iv. we have an account of the first poet; the first dweller in tents; the first forger of metals; and the first musician—all descendants of Cain. "Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ"—the harp standing as the representative of all stringed, and the organ of all wind, instruments. Attempts have been made to explain how this discovery of Jubal's was handed down till after the Flood. But, as Mr. Aldis Wright, to whose article on music in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' I am indebted for these historic facts, says, "Conjectures are worse than an honest confession of ignorance. The Flood did not wash away every musical instrument, and for ever deprive the world of the solace which music gives. The shepherds of the uplands of Syria knew how to chase away care with songs, and thrill the emotions with tabret and harp. 'Wherefore didst thou fly away secretly?' said Laban to Jacob, 'and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and harp.' On the banks of the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang their song of triumphal deliverance, and Miriam led a procession of women chanting in chorus: 'Sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.' The song was accompanied by timbrels and dances; probably Miriam sang the solos, and the women took up the chorus; for it is said, 'Miriam answered them.'"

Music was early employed in the service of idolatry. You will recall the musical instruments when the image of gold was set up in the plains of Dura. An earlier instance is in connection with the golden calf which Aaron made. As Moses and Joshua came down from the mountain on which they had received the

two tables of the law, a strange sound saluted their ears. To Joshua it seemed like a war-shout, but Moses said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for the mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear." Rude and uncultivated must such music have been. Could much variation have been played on those silver trumpets which were used to intimate the striking of the tents and resuming of the wilderness journeys? Would those rams' horns with which the priests brought down the walls of Jericho, or those trumpets which Gideon's three hundred men blew, have been like the sound of one that had a pleasant voice and could play well on an instrument? The song of Deborah and Barak is metrical, and was probably intended to be sung with musical accompaniment as one of the people's songs, like that with which Jephthah's daughter and her companions met Jephthah on his victorious return. The song with which the women of Israel hailed David after the slaughter of the Philistine was perhaps struck off on the excitement of the moment. "They came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tabrets, with joy, and instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

So far there appears to have been no systematic cultivation of music. When, however, the schools of the prophets were instituted music was taught. Professional musicians were attached to the king's person. David played before Saul. And when David became king he had about him singing men and singing women. Solomon says, "I gat me men singers and women singers." He composed songs. When the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom there must have been many skilled musicians in the country. With Chenaniah, the master of the song, at their head, David and the Levites brought up the ark with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. Probably the Levites had all along practised music. Living a peaceful life they would be attracted to this peaceful art. It is likely that some SERVICE OF SONG was used in the tabernacle. But be this as it may, David was the patron, and the temple was the school, of music. The three divisions of the tribe of Levi had a representative family in the temple choir. David composed and taught them a chant. For ages it was used as David's, and was sung on three great occasions—before the army of Jehoshaphat; on laying the foundation of the second temple; and by the army of the Maccabees. The chant is Psalm cxxxvi. Women were in the temple choir. We read of Heman's three daughters. Among those who returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel were two hundred singing men and singing women. Amongst the instruments played before the ark were trumpets, which appear to have been reserved for the priests. Being also employed in royal proclamations they set forth by way of symbol, the royalty of Jehovah, and sounded the alarm against his enemies. At the dedication of Solomon's temple one hundred and twenty priests blew the trumpets, while the Levites with their instruments *made one sound to be heard in praising the Lord.* And in the restoration of worship by Hezekiah, when the burnt offering began *the song of Jehovah* began also, with the trumpets, and with the instruments of David, King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded all until the burnt offering was finished. The altar was, in Scripture phraseology, the table of Jehovah, and the sacrifices were his feasts. And as at kings' tables the musicians play, so at the table of the King of kings was this service rendered. The temple was God's palace, and as the Levite sentries guarded the gates they sang, "Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." Many of the psalms we know were temple-songs. Of David's influence on Hebrew song let an English poet speak—

"The harp the monarch-minstrel swept,
The king of men, the loved of Heaven,
Which music hallowed while she wept,
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given,
Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riven!

"It softened men of iron mould,
It gave them virtues not their own;
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,
That felt not, fired not to the tone,
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne!

"It told the triumphs of our king,
It wafted glory to our God;
It made our gladdened valleys ring,
The cedars bow, the mountains nod;
Its sound aspired to heaven, and there abode!

"Since then, though heard on earth no more,
Devotion, and her daughter Love,
Still bid the bursting spirit soar,
To sounds that seem as from above,
In dreams that day's broad light cannot remove."

Solomon provided for the singers with the same munificence with which he adorned the temple.

But although music was consecrated in the temple it was not confined to the temple. Whatever adorns God's service reacts on the homes and haunts of men. Music was enthroned in the temple, but it made its familiar abode in the homes of the Hebrew people. Kings had court musicians. And in the degenerate days of the later monarchs, the prophet tells us of the effeminate gallants of Israel stretched on beds of ivory, covered with perfumes; and as Nero fiddled whilst Rome was in flames, so they amid their nation's wreck chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David. But because music may minister to vice that is no reason for deriding it. What may not? Many a Hebrew home was made joyous after a day of sultry heat, spent among the vines or in the sheep-folds, by family songs. Only when national sin had brought God's curse upon the land could it be said—"All the merry-hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song." It was when heavy hearts sat by the waters of Babylon that joy-inspiring harps hung on the willows, and cunning hands no longer discoursed sweet music. Their bridal processions were accompanied with music and song. Love had its songs to embody its passion. Sorrow had its funereal chants. The grape-gatherers sang as they gathered in the vintage, and the wine-presses were trodden to the march of music. Women sang as they toiled at the mill. And as long as God smiled approval on the land of the Hebrew people, they were a people of song. Their land was a field which the Lord had blessed.

Music passed into the early Christian Church. Our Lord is found with his disciples singing a hymn. The Man of Sorrows was acquainted with song. "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," is the burden of more than one New Testament passage. Changes it has undergone. By the inroads of barbarians; by the upgrowth of the Reformation; by modern revolutions; by persecutions; and by the misguided opposition of conscientious men, the service of song in the house of the Lord has been affected. It has been "chastened, but not killed;" "cast down, but not destroyed."

Bring song into the sanctuary. The temple choir were Levites. The priests were of the same tribe. Pulpit and choir-gallery both have place. When the preacher fails with the Bible, the choir may succeed with the Hymn Book.

When we pass through the gate into the city we shall sing in. John looked.

and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed from the earth. And he heard a voice as of the voice of many waters, as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers, harping with their harps. Let us honour every faculty. Let us cultivate and consecrate our gifts. Let us all use the service of song to praise the Lord, whose mercy—according to David's chant—endureth for ever.

ADDENDA TO CHAPTER XI.

Priests and the Congregation.

"It is very worthy of notice that in the numbering of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, not the priests but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin take the lead, and only then follow the priests and Levites; so much the more worthy of notice, because in the new congregation, following the captivity, according to the entire direction which its development took, and according to everything which was considered as of the greatest moment, the high priests, and the priesthood in general, had a particularly high significance. It is as if the consciousness were indicated, that the priest and Levites, in spite of their distinction, which the Lord hath appointed to them in the affairs of Israel, had been nevertheless nothing at all if they had not had a congregation near and around them, and if they had not succeeded in obtaining satisfactory fruit for their activity, namely, a genuine and true piety, which should substantially prove they were not there in vain. Would also that Christian priests, that is, preachers of the gospel, might preserve a lively consciousness that it is not enough for them to have fellowship with their brethren in office, that they are nothing, and can profit and signify nothing, if not some, if only a small congregation stand by them, in whom the seed which they sow springs up, grows, and bears fruit."

Holy People on Sacred Soil.

"When one looks at the space which the Jewish congregation inhabited round Jerusalem, how very small was the territory occupied by the people of God, the only race which possessed a clear knowledge of the only true and holy God! A few miles, from three to six, north and south, east and west, comprised the entire district. Compared with our countries; yes, even with our provinces; this district appears to us almost as a vanishing nothing. And nevertheless what powers for the subjugation of entire humanity, for the transformation of all its relations, and for the subduing of all circumstances, has God the Lord been able to put in the people of this oasis, in the, at the same time, insignificant, and in many respects miserable race, which cultivated the ground there, or raised cattle! If anywhere, surely here arises a testimony for Paul's word, 'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty' (1 Cor. i. 27). A consoling promise also for Christendom in those times, in which it appears as though it were being compressed on all sides, and when it is in truth losing position after position. Let it lose in length and breadth in order afterwards to gain so much the more in height. Even the gates of hell cannot swallow up the Church of the Lord."—*Dr. Schultz, in Lange.*

CHAPTER XII.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.] "The list of the inhabitants of the province (chap. xi.) is followed by lists of the priests and Levites (xii. 1—26). These different lists are, in fact, all connected with the genealogical register of the Israelite population of the whole province, taken by Nehemiah (vii. 5) for the purpose of enlarging the population of Jerusalem . . . Vers. 1—9 contains a list of the heads of the priests and Levites who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua. The high priests during five generations are next mentioned by name (vers. 10, 11). Then follow the names of the heads of the priestly houses, in the days of Joiakim, the high priest; and finally (vers. 22—26), the names of the heads of the Levites at the same period, with titles and subscriptions."—*Keil.* According to *Keil*, "the difference between the names in the two lists of chapters x., xii., is to be explained simply by the fact that the names of those who sealed the covenant (chap x.) are names neither of orders nor houses, but of heads of houses living in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Of these names a portion coincides, indeed, with the names of the orders and houses, while the rest are different. The sameness of names does not, however, prove that the individuals belonged to the house whose name they bore. On the contrary, it appears from xii. 13, 16, that of two Meshullams, one was the head of the house of Ezra, the other of the house of Ginnethon." **27. Out of all their places**] The Levites were scattered through the province. **30. Purified themselves . . . people . . . gates . . . wall**] This was probably done by the sprinkling of water (Num. xix. 18), and the offering of sacrifices. (Compare 2 Chron. xxix. 21.) "The central point of the solemnity was a procession of two bands of singers upon the wall. Nehemiah brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies and two processions. These went each upon the wall all in different directions, and stopped opposite each other at the house of God. . . . . At the head of one procession went Ezra, the scribe, with one-half of the nobles; at the head of the second, Nehemiah with the other half."—*Keil.* (See topography of the book of Nehemiah, pages 87—89.) **43. Great sacrifices**] *i. e.* "thank offerings which were eaten by the offerers in a happy feast, after the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord (Lev. iii.)."—*Crosby.* With xii. 44, according to *Keil*, Nehemiah's Later Reforms begin, "*at that time* being used in a general sense." *Crosby* differs, referring the phrase to the time of the dedication. *Others* postpone the dedication, making it one of the Later Reforms. **44. Portions of the law**] That is, portions prescribed by the law for the priests and Levites. (See Num. xviii. 20—24; Deut. xviii. 1—8.) **That waited**] Literally, *the ones standing;* that is, standing to minister before the Lord. (Compare Deut. x. 8.) **45. Kept the ward**] Cared for all that concerned the temple; did their duty faithfully. **47. Sanctified unto the Levites**] "To sanctify, said of the bringing of gifts and dues to the ministers of the sanctuary" (comp. 1 Chron. xxvi. 27; Lev. xxvii. 14). **On the matter itself**, comp. x. 38 *seq.*, and Num. xviii. 26—29.—*Keil.*

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER XII.

Ver.	27—43.	The Dedication of the Wall.	Ver.	43.	A Great Rejoicing.
„	23.	A Book.	„	43.	True Joy.
„	24.	Posthumous Influence.	„	44—47.	Thanksgiving and Thanksliving.
„	30.	Beginning at the Right Place.	„	46.	The Good Old Times.

THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL.

xii. 27—43. *And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication, &c.*

WE have read of the building of the wall of Jerusalem, with a great deal of fear and trembling; we have here an account of the dedicating of it, with a great deal of joy and triumph. They that sow in tears shall thus reap.

I. **We must inquire what was the meaning of this dedication of the wall.** We will suppose it to include the dedication of the city too—the thing containing for the thing contained; and, therefore, it was not done till the city was pretty well replenished.

1. *It was a solemn thanksgiving to God, for his great mercy to them in the perfecting of this undertaking, which they were the more sensible of, because of the difficulty and opposition they had met with in it*

2. *They hereby devoted the city in a peculiar manner to God, and to his honour, and took possession of it for him, and in his name.* All our cities, all our houses, must have "Holiness to the Lord" written upon them; but this city was (so as never any other was) a holy city, the city of the Great King. It had been so ever since God chose it to put his name there, and as such, it being now refitted, it was afresh dedicated to God by the builders and inhabitants, in token of their acknowledgment that they were tenants, and their desire that it might still be his, and that the property of it might never be altered. Whatever is done for their safety, ease, and comfort, must be designed for God's honour and glory.

3. *They hereby put the city and its walls under the Divine protection, owning that, unless the Lord kept the city, the walls were built in vain.* When this city was in possession of the Jebusites, they committed the guardianship of it to their gods, though they were blind and lame ones. With much more reason do the people of God commit it to his keeping who is all-wise and almighty. The superstitious founders of cities had an eye to the lucky position of the heavens, but these pious founders had an eye to God only, to his providence, and not to fortune.

II. We must observe with what solemnity it was performed, under the direction of Nehemiah.

1. *The Levites from all parts of the country were summoned to attend.* The city must be dedicated to God; and therefore his ministers must be employed in the doing of it, and the surrender must pass through their hands. When those solemn feasts were over (chaps. viii., ix.), they had gone home to their respective posts to mind their cares in the country; but now their presence and assistance were again called for.

2. *Pursuant to this summons there was a general rendezvous of all the Levites* Observe in what method they proceed. (1) They purified themselves. We are concerned to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, when any work for God is to pass through them. Themselves they purified, and then the people. They that would be instrumental to sanctify others, must sanctify themselves, and set themselves apart for God with purity of mind and sincerity of intention. Then they purified the gates and the wall. Then may we expect comfort when we are prepared to receive it. "To the pure all things are pure" (Tit. i. 15); and to them who are sanctified, houses and tables, and their creature comforts and enjoyments are sanctified (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). This purification was performed, it is probable, by sprinkling the water of purifying or of separation, as it is called (Num. xix. 9), on themselves and the people, the walls and the gates; a type of the blood of Christ, with which our consciences being purged from dead works, we become fit to serve the living God, and to be his care. (2) The princes, priests, and Levites walked round upon the wall in two companies, to signify the dedication of it all to God, the whole circuit of it. This procession is here largely described; one end of the ceremony being to affect them with the mercy they were giving thanks for, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it among them.

3. *The people greatly rejoiced.* While the princes, priests, and Levites testified their joy and thankfulness, by great sacrifices, sound of trumpet, musical instruments, and songs of praise, the common people testified theirs by loud shouts, which were heard afar off, farther than the more harmonious sound of their songs and music; and these shouts coming from a sincere and hearty joy are here taken notice of: for God overlooks not, but graciously accepts, the honest zealous services of mean people, though there be in them little of art, and they are far from being fine. It is observed that the women and children rejoiced; and their harmonies were not despised but recorded to their praise. All that share in public mercies ought to join in public thanksgivings. The reason given is, that "God had made them rejoice with great joy;" he had given them both matter for joy and hearts to rejoice; his providence had made them safe and easy, and then his grace made

them cheerful and thankful. The baffled opposition of their enemies no doubt added to their joy, and mixed triumph with it. Great mercies call for the most solemn return of praise, "in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!"—*Matthew Henry.*

A Book.

xii. 23. *The chief of the fathers were written in the book of the chronicles.*

THE BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

A book is a marvel—why not say a standing miracle?

I. A book unites the ages. Brings the past into the present: borrows the future to give the present significance. The "sceptred spirits of history" rule us still. "The world's grey patriarchs" thought *for us.* With books *the poorest enters the highest society: the loneliest need not be solitary.* A good book the truest guide, philosopher, friend.

II. A book reveals life's importance. A book gives permanence to thought, because thoughts sway the world: gives permanence to deeds, because if good they encourage, if bad they warn. Life is a writing. And with deeper than Pilate's meaning, "What I have written, I have written."

III. A book silently anticipates the judgment. It is written. A record may be appealed to. Is this thy handwriting? God's "Book of Remembrance."

Posthumous Influence.

xii. 24. *The chief of the Levites . . with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God.*

A man's influence after he is dead. He is still present with his people.

I. By his will. "The *commandment* of David." The grip of the dead is on our fields and churches; schools and hospitals.

II. By his writings. Immortality of genius. *David's* Psalms. Solomon's proverbs. And outside the circle of sacred history, Shakespeare and Milton, Bunyan, and a thousand others. "Being dead, they yet speak."

III. By his example. "David *the man of God.*" Goodness is greatness. Kind words; good deeds never die. "Let your light shine before men." Intentional influence may fail: unconscious influence cannot. For good or evil a man lives. For good or evil his deeds will live after him. "The memory of the just is blessed."

Beginning at the Right Place.

xii. 30. *And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.*

I. A pure Church may make a sound commonwealth. "They purified *themselves.*" Like priest, like people. And as with the people so with the priest. Cleric and laic act and react on each other. Pulpit and pew not two but one. All history testifies that an impure priesthood means an impure people. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Eli's sons. Uzzah may not sustain the ark. Jesus swept the temple of the traffickers.

II. To a pure people all things are pure. "They purified the people, and the gates, and the wall." Citizens and city: sanctuary and house: God's work and their own.

"All things are sacred.
The eye of God is on them all
And hallows all."

Jesus revealed God in the minutest. Peter's vision. The present preparatory. "I think our fathers had a better, a grander, a diviner idea even of common life than we have, when they spoke about the trades and professions of men as being their *calling*. We sometimes use the word yet, though it has almost passed out of use. It is a pity, for there is a great thought in it. Why, it makes all the men, streets, shops, and warehouses to me, as I walk along, Divine objects. I feel that I am in a Divine place when I think of the men about me as following their *calling*. I feel that there is a God above men; that there is a God in human society; a God in the shops and counting-houses of London, touching and teaching every human being; and that every man is occupying the place, and putting his hand to the work, to which God has called him. Sometimes you may see a man at a certain calling which is but preparatory. He is meant for something else. Providence opens the way, and he goes up higher and does another thing. God has given us a spiritual vocation—a Divine calling in Jesus Christ, and we are to walk worthy of that vocation, here—doing all worldly things in a spiritual manner, preparatory to a higher calling which shall come one day, when we shall enter upon other forms of duty and service, to which the present inferior forms of duty and service faithfully fulfilled shall gradually prepare and fit us."—*Binney*.

A Great Rejoicing.

xii. 43. *That day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.*

A great rejoicing as it should be.

I. Associated with the rites of religion. "Sacrifices." Holy-day and holiday united. Holy-days joy-bringing times. Holidays not to be dissevered from the sacred nature of those who share them.

II. The outcome of a great deliverance. From captivity to freedom: exile to home: heathen surroundings to heaven-chosen city and divinely-built temple. The memory of God's great goodness should awaken joy—a joy that all may share. "The wives also and the children rejoiced."

III. The preparation for strong adhesion to the sacred cause. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And you must be strong to labour. Sacred festivals not an end but a means to an end. Get to give; know to communicate; experience to declare; rest to toil; share to serve—this is the will of God concerning us.

True Joy.

xii. 43. *That day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced.*

I. Its right. The God who has given us life, wishes also that it shall move joyfully; the God who always anew overwhelms us with favours wishes that they should fulfil their mission; that is, make us happy, in the end holy.

II. Its occasion. God's grace, which has strengthened, protected, assured or elevated our lower or higher life. The chief sites in Jerusalem testified to this, and in the Christian Church; yes, indeed, in our lives, all the heights testify thereof.

III. Its kind. It raises itself to God, is a joy in him, that is, becomes a service to God and our neighbours.—*Dr. Schultz.*

Thanksgiving and Thanksliving.

xii. 44—47. *And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first-fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited. And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, &c.*

We have here an account of the remaining good effects of this universal joy that was at the dedication of the wall. When the solemnities of a thanksgiving-day leave such impressions on ministers and people, as that both are more careful and cheerful in doing their duty afterward, then are they indeed acceptable to God, and turn to a good account. So it was here.

I. The ministers were more careful than they had been of their work. The respect the people paid them upon this occasion encouraged them to diligence and watchfulness; "the singers kept the ward of their God," attending in due time to the duty of their office; the porters too they "kept the ward of the purification," this is, they took care to preserve the purity of the temple, by denying admission to those that were ceremonially unclean. When the joy of the Lord thus engageth us to our duty, and enlargeth us in it, it is then an earnest of that joy which, in concurrence with the perfecting of holiness, will be our everlasting bliss.

II. The people were more careful than they had been of the maintenance of their ministers. The people, at the dedication of the wall, among other things which they made matter of their joy, rejoiced "for the priests and the Levites that waited." They had a great deal of comfort in their ministers, and were glad of them; when they observed how diligently they waited, and what pains they took in their work, they rejoiced in them. The surest way for ministers to recommend themselves to their people, and gain an interest in their affections, is to wait on their ministry, to be humble and industrious, and to mind their business; when these did so, the people thought nothing too much for them, to encourage them. The law had provided them their portions; but what the better were they for that provision, if what the law appointed them either was not duly collected or not justly paid them?

1. *Care is here taken for the collecting of their dues.* They were modest, and would rather lose their right than call for it themselves; the people were many of them careless, and would not bring it unless they were called upon; and therefore "some were appointed" whose office it should be "to gather" in to the treasuries, "out of the fields of the cities, the portions of the law for the priests and Levites," that their portion might not be lost for want of being demanded. This is a piece of good service both to ministers and people, that the one may not come short of their maintenance, nor the other of their duty.

2. *Care is taken that, being gathered in, it might be duly paid out.* They gave the singers and porters their daily portion, over and above what was due to them as Levites; for we may suppose when David and Solomon appointed them their work, above what was required from them as Levites, they settled a fund for their further encouragement. Let those that labour more abundantly in the word and doctrine be counted worthy of this double honour. As for the other Levites, the tithes, here called the holy things, were duly set apart for them, out of which they paid the priests their tithe according to the law. Both are said to be sanctified. When what is contributed, either voluntarily or by law, for the support of religion, and the maintenance of the ministry, is given with an eye to God and his honour, it is sanctified, and shall be accepted of him accordingly; and it will cause the blessing to rest on the house, and all that is in it.—*Matthew Henry.*

The Good Old Times.

xii. 46. *The days of old.*

The aged regret, the young despise, these good old times. The old feed on memory, the young on hope. These place the golden age in the future, those in the past.

I. Nothing is necessarily good because it is old. "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?" Habit, education, tradition, prejudice play an important part in history.

II. That which is old is presumptively valuable. Good lasts. Truth is as old as the hills.

Application. Prove all things. Despise nothing. Gather treasures wherever they can be found. Be not blinded by passion. There is a soul of goodness in things that at first sight seem only evil. The present is a huge borrower from the dead past. Reverence the true word, the saintly deed whenever found. God is all, and in all things bright and good.

CHAPTER XIII.

Explanatory Notes.] 1. On that day] This is to be understood in the same sense as *at that time*, in chap. xii. 44. **But no doubt** public readings of the law took place frequently during Nehemiah's administration. **Found written]** "The part of the law which forbade mingling with the other nations was specially read on the dedication-day. Deut. xxiii. 3 would naturally be read, as also Deut. vii. 1—6. . . . No Moabite or Ammonite family could be admitted to the privileges of Jewry until in the tenth generation after quitting heathenism and formally allying itself with Israel."—*Crosby*. **3. They separated from Israel all the mixed multitude]** Non-Israelitish people who followed the Israelites at their departure from Egypt. Here transferred to strangers living among them. **4, 5. Eliashib . . . Tobiah]** Nehemiah left for Persia. Irregularities were permitted. Amongst them this desecration. **6. In the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon]** "Probably the 'time set' by Nehemiah and approved by the king (chap. ii. 6), was twelve years. At the expiration of this term he was obliged to leave the superintendence of affairs at Jerusalem and return to the court. Artaxerxes is called 'king of Babylon,' instead of 'king of Persia,' probably because at this time of Nehemiah's return the court was removed to Babylon for some special state reason."—*Crosby*. **After certain days]** No definite interval. Some expositors think a year. No proof. **8. I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah]** Nehemiah a man of decision. **10. The Levites and the singers . . were fled]** Their allowance had been withheld. They fled to their own fields for livelihood. **11. Then contended I with the rulers]** They had soon forgotten their vow (chap. x. 39). **I gathered them]** The Levites. **13. I made treasurers]** Managers of the stores. Four faithful men appointed. **14. Wipe not out]** Conceives of his deeds as written in a book. **15. In those days]** When he returned to Jerusalem. Sabbath had become desecrated. Work was done and produce brought in. **17. The nobles]** Nehemiah reminded them of the unchanged law and the sufferings its visitation had brought upon their fathers (Jer. xvii. 20—27). **20. Lodged without]** The traders forbidden to enter hoped the people would come out to buy. **22. Cleanse themselves and keep the gates]** Increasing the sanctity of the Sabbath by making Levites responsible. **23. Jews that had married]** Borderers who by living near the heathen nations had formed alliances. The children's speech was affected. **25]** The action of a governor acting officially. **28. I chased him from me]** Forced him to leave Jerusalem. **30. Thus cleansed I them . . . and appointed the wards of the priests and Levites]** So important did he deem the temple. **31. Remember me]** A repeated supplication. Nehemiah was great and good.

HOMILETICAL CONTENTS OF CHAPTER XIII.

Ver.	1—3.	Renewed Purification.	
,,	1, 2.	The Irrevocableness of Wrong-doing.	
,,	2.	Good out of Evil.	
,,	4—8.	Reformation a Slow Work.	
Ver.	17, 18.	Profanation of the Sabbath	
,,	22.	Nehemiah.	
,,	26.	Solomon.	
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Renewed Purification.

xiii. 1—3. *On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.*

The duty of the Church to purify itself constantly anew.

I. In regard to those with whom they assimilate themselves. In the Old Testament, in regard to the Ammonites, &c. In the Church, in regard to those who not only go astray, but also who will not allow themselves to be bettered, and who thus exclude themselves.

II. Whereon it grounds itself. Not only on the right of self-preservation, but also upon God's word.

III. What it aims at. That the Church set forth more and more what it should be as Christ's spotless bride.—*Dr. Schultz.*

Illustrations: The true and grand idea of a Church is a society for the purpose of making men like Christ—earth like heaven—the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of Christ.—*Arnold.*

The Irrevocableness of Wrong-doing.

xiii. 1, 2. *On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them.*

"The severe exclusion of the Moabite and Ammonite was an enacted token against sin. Even these blood relations of Israel were to be kept away as polluted, because they showed no sympathy with Israel, and made a deliberate and vile attempt to plunge Israel into sin. A permanent horror was to be erected between Israel and these monsters of iniquity. The key to many of the stern Mosaic statutes is to be found in the necessity of holding up the heinousness of sin, which men are ever ready to make light of."—*Crosby.*

The immortality of evil.

I. It is done—cannot be undone. An act has passed into the irreparable past. It has become part of the constitution of things. Man may forget it, and God forgive it—but it is done. The doer may plead ignorance, prejudice, habit, custom—excuse may busy itself, and regret plead for pity, but the deed is done. Let inexperience remember and hardness ponder this.

II. It has moulded you—you can never again be the same. The dyer's hand is subdued to what it works in. A man's trade, profession, or calling is indicated in his features. Habit is a second nature. The beauty of the soul touches the form and face. Vice makes the doer unlovely; stamps its image and superscription upon the otherwise divine form. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked," &c.

III. It has warped others. Their task is rendered more difficult. Their steps will henceforth be more faltering. An Ammonite may thwart Israel. "Ahab made Israel to sin." That is his title to remembrance—he has an immortality. I am my brother's keeper. His path and mine meet. I cannot throw off my responsibility. Doing wrong is ruinous. Sin is the great foe. The wages of sin are duly paid even to the uttermost farthing.

Good out of Evil.

xiii. 2. *Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.*

Nevertheless Balaam's memory is infamous. Evil was intended though God averted it. So in life.

I. Sin. Sin is still sin albeit the sinner is forgiven. God loves not sin. "God hath turned the curse of sin into a blessing. And here it is proper to reflect upon the profound and incomprehensible wisdom of God, who hath made an advantage to us even of our sin and misery. It was truly said by one of the ancients, upon this account, that Job was a happier man upon the dunghill than Adam was in paradise. His holiness indeed was perfect, his happiness was great; but neither of them permanent and indefeasible, as our happiness by the Mediator is. So that in the same sense we may call Adam's fall a happy fall, because ordered and overruled by the wisdom of God to our great advantage. And to this purpose Austin somewhere sweetly speaks: 'O how happily did I fall in Adam, who rose again more happily in Christ!' Thus did the Lord turn a poison into an antidote; thus did that dreadful fall make way for a more blessed and fixed state. Now we are so confirmed and established by Christ in the favour of God, that there can be no more such fatal breaches and dreadful jars betwixt God and his reconciled ones for ever. The bone that's well set is stronger where 'tis knit, than it was before. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!"—*Fluvel.*

II. Sorrow. "God has turned the curse of sorrow into a blessing. Sweet are the uses of adversity! In God's hand indeed they are: when he puts his children into the furnace of affliction, it is that he may thoroughly purge away all their dross. A great writer has spoken with great beauty of the resources which God has placed within us for bringing good out of evil, or, at least, for greatly alleviating our trials in the cases of sickness and misfortune. 'The cutting and irritating grain of sand,' he says, 'which by accident or incaution has got within the shell, incites the living inmate to secrete from its own resources the means of coating the intrusive substance. And is it not, or may it not be, even so with the irregularities and unevenness of health and fortune in our own case?' We too may turn diseases into pearls. But how much more wonderful are the wisdom and mercy of God, in making the spiritual trials and distresses of his people their necessary discipline for their highest good, the means for the greatest perfection and stability of their characters! This is indeed a wonderful transformation. 'God,' says holy Leighton, 'hath many sharp cutting instruments, and rough files for the polishing of his jewels; and those he especially esteems and means to make the most resplendent, he hath oftenest his tools upon.'"—*Cheever.*

III. Death. "God hath turned the curse of death into a blessing. It were a waste of words to attempt to prove that death is indeed a curse: it was the woe specially denounced against men as the result of transgression—the ill inflicted on the workers of iniquity. But, through the obedience and death of Christ, the Redeemer, the sting of death has been destroyed, the uncertainty of the future has been dissipated, and, by the destruction of guilt, separation from the world has been revealed, as the beginning of a perfected happiness and an enlarged blessedness to the believer. If it is indeed a blessed thing for a spirit, weighed down with a sinking mortality, and groaning beneath the load of unnumbered ills, to flee away from its troubles, and soar amid the cloudless light of immortal day, then death has been turned into a blessing, since it merely cuts asunder the chains whereby we are bound to earth, and admits the spirit to a land of peace and joy. If it is indeed a blessed thing for a being long pent up amid the closeness of a dungeon, to exchange its pestilential air for the fragrant breath of paradise, then death

has been turned into a blessing, since it serves to dissociate the children of the covenant from the pollution of this world, and advance them to the regions beyond the grave, where the Lamb shall feed them and guide them to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. I say, if God hath made death the very instrument of exchanging earth for heaven, of ending the warfare and strife of time, and crowning believers with the unspeakably precious reward, then undoubtedly, while they exultingly proclaim, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'—they must not cease to remember that death was indeed a crying evil, a bitter curse, but that our God turned the curse into a blessing."—*M'Naughton.*

Reformation a Slow Work.

xiii. 4—8. *And before this, Eliashib the priest, &c.*

When Nehemiah returned to Persia he left the people penitent and devoted the temple restored; the priests and Levites at their posts. All were loyal to conscience and God. When Nehemiah came back again to Jerusalem he found Tobiah in the temple, Levites in the fields, tithes in the people's hands, the house of God forsaken, and the Sabbath of God desecrated. And it grieved him sore. He had to build again from the foundations.

I. Reformers are sanguine men. They see the evil, and the needs-be for its removal. Too often they overlook the herculean task that lies before them.

II. Reformation meets with opposition. The reformers propose to destroy. They confront the selfishness of human nature, and war against the passions of men.

III. Reformation must build up after it has destroyed. Building up is slower than pulling down. All reformers have been disappointed. Those whom they have striven to help have been their most determined hinderers. Faith, hope, and courage are indispensable.

Profanation of the Sabbath.

xiii. 17, 18. *Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.*

Introduction. Historical. Nehemiah absent; disorder ensued. Among other irregularities profanation of the Sabbath became frequent and flagrant. It moved the spirit of Nehemiah not so much that the men of Tyre sold their fish and wares on the Sabbath, which in consideration of their being heathen they might be expected to do, as that they sold them to "the men of Judah," the visible worshippers of God, and "in Jerusalem," the seat of his worship; coming up to the very threshold of his house with their merchandise, as if in contempt of his presence and authority. But we have a more serious concern in this matter than merely to vent our indignation against "the men of Tyre." Our first and main concern is to see that our own garments are clean. Nor is it sufficient that our own habits in respect to our personal observation of the Sabbath are correct. In this respect the nobles of Judah, for aught that appears, were without fault. Yet Nehemiah did not hesitate to charge them with the guilt of the profanations which they witnessed. "What evil thing is this that *ye do*," said he, "and profane the Sabbath day?" He said this on the assumption that they had the power to prevent the sin,

and were answerable for the consequences of their neglect. Hence I derive the sentiment that—

MEN OF AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE INCUR GREAT GUILT, AND BRING WRATH UPON THE COMMUNITY, BY CONNIVING AT PROFANATIONS OF THE SABBATH.

Men of authority and *influence*, because in all countries where the people are the source of power, men in authority can do but little unsupported by men of influence. As men of all classes have their share of influence the responsibility rests in a measure upon all. By whatever means the influence of individuals is increased, their responsibility also is enhanced.

1. *Profanation of the Sabbath is a great sin.* The Sabbath is a Divine institution. At the creation, God by His express appointment set it apart from a common to a sacred use. This appointment He confirmed and renewed at Mount Sinai. Our Saviour, by the authority vested by him in his apostles, added his sanction to the appointment and made it a law of his kingdom, after the obligation of the Jewish ritual had ceased, with only the circumstantial change of the first instead of the seventh in the series, as the day of rest, in commemoration of his resurrection. Consecrated peculiarly to God's service. Wantonly to profane the Sabbath is open contempt of God. This is not a sin of *ignorance*. A few men there may be who seriously disbelieve in the moral obligation of the Sabbath, and others are blinded by custom in regard to the guilt of certain common violations of it, but the great mass know what they do. This sin is an outrage on the rights of men. It opens the door to universal licentiousness; enfeebles the laws of society; tends to destroy our best blessings and blot out our dearest hopes. The Sabbath is necessary to the perpetuation of true religion. Some, while they think lightly of religion, profess highly to value free institutions. They boast of liberty, and of the sciences, the arts, the enterprise, the universal education of the people, and the general prosperity and happiness which they claim to be its fruits. And what is liberty? The unrestricted enjoyment of our rights, so far as this is consistent with the wellbeing of society. What liberty then can there be among depraved men, without law to restrain their appetites and passions? or what efficacy can there be in law, without a corresponding moral sentiment in the community to sustain it? or what efficacious moral sentiment without religion? or what religion without the Sabbath? Turn your eyes on those regions of the earth where the Sabbath is unknown, and what do you find the moral, social, and civil condition of men there? See also those portions of the world where the Sabbath is now abandoned, or given up to pastime.

2. *Civil laws to protect the Sabbath from open violation, are just and proper.* In Jewish national code the law of the Sabbath was enforced by civil penalties. On this ground it was that Nehemiah went to the magistrates of Jerusalem and charged them with guilt in forbearing to exercise the authority which God had vested in them to restrain profanations of the day. Equally incumbent is it on every other community, which has authority over its own members, whether it be a family or an empire, to protect the Sabbath from desecration. Nor is there anything in this unjust. To enforce a spiritual observation of the Sabbath is not indeed the province of civil authority. With duties appropriately religious it has no direct concern. These it must leave to the higher authority of God, and the conscience of every individual. But to protect those who are disposed religiously to observe the Sabbath, in the peaceful enjoyment of the privilege, is no less just and proper, than it is to protect them in the enjoyment of any other right or privilege. They too are the mass of the community. Ninety-nine hundred probably would consider a general disregard of the Sabbath destructive to their best interests. Such being the fact, to require that no laws for the protection of the Sabbath be made, or that having been made, they be a dead letter; to require that the mass of our citizens yield to the few, and be governed by their wishes, is

a position which, on any other subject of legislation, would not for a moment be tolerated.

3. *For a due execution of these laws, men clothed with the authority and the influence to do this, are answerable to God, and incur great guilt by neglecting it.* They are ministers of God. They have taken official oaths. The fact of their being clothed with office, binds them to discharge its duties.

APPLICATION. 1. To the friends of Sabbath. 2. To fathers and mothers. 3. To the young.—*Noah Porter, D.D.; abridged.*

Illustrations:—"Each should do what his talent and influence in society enjoin and permit. It is the principle upon which I insist. If we cannot absolutely shut the gates of our great cities to the entrance of merchandise, we may do something to lessen the evil. We may shut the door of our houses—we may prohibit the purchase or reception of articles of consumption by our servants and dependants—we may encourage those upon whom we have any influence, to observe the sacred day. Let only the zeal, the courage, the firmness, the disinterestedness of Ezra and Nehemiah be connected with their piety and love to the house of their God, and much would be done."—*Bishop Wilson.*

"We find from the beginning of the Christian Church that all days were not alike to Christians, but that one day, the first-day of the week, was singled out and separated from the others as their day of worship. The end of the Paschal Lamb was accomplished in the sacrifice of our Lord; the end of the one Temple has been accomplished; but the end of the Sabbath has not been accomplished, and will not be till toil, and trouble, and sin, and sorrow shall cease. Then it will be merged in the eternal Sabbatism which remains for the people of God. But till then the solemn words of our Lord are as a wall of fire around it, to protect its sacredness and integrity. 'Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'"—*John Kennedy, D.D.*

"The Sabbath is the guardian of every other Divine institution. The sin of profaning the Sabbath stamps in the individual, the family, or the nation, which is guilty of it, the character of irreligious, and speedily ripens them for the judgments of God. This is the danger of being any way concerned in this iniquity, we are furthering an evil which would ultimately destroy religion itself, and which will assuredly prove as ruinous to the temporal renown, as the spiritual interests, of our country."—*Rev. J. A. Wylie.*

"It is a most important sentiment, and ought to be kept constantly before the public mind, that religion is the most direct and powerful cause of national comfort, prosperity, and security, and that in its absence all their other causes must be limited and transient in their effects. If religion were a mere abstraction of devotion, confined to the closet and the sanctuary, and restricted in its influence to the imagination and the taste, but not having any necessary control over the conscience, the heart, and the life, and not intended to regulate the intercourse of society; if it consisted merely in attendance on the rites and forms of the Church, and began and ended upon the threshold of the house of God, then it would be difficult to point out what a connection such a religion had with the welfare of a country. It would, in that case, resemble the ivy, which, though it add a picturesque effect to a venerable fabric, imparts neither stability to its walls, nor convenience to its apartments. But if religion be indeed a principle of the heart, an element of the character, the habit of thinking, feeling, and acting aright in all our social relations, the basis of every virtue, and the main prop of every excellence; if it be indeed the fear of the Lord by which men depart from evil; if it be faith working by love; if it be such a belief in the gospel of Christ as leads to a conformity to his example, religion being such as this must secure the welfare of any country. There is not one single influence, whether of law, of science, of art, of learning, tending to the well-being of society, which true religion does not guard and strengthen."—*James.*

The Lord's Day.—Stations on the line of your journey are not your journey's end, but each one brings you nearer. Such are our Lord's Days. A haven is not *home*, but it is a place of quiet and rest, where the rough waves are stayed. Such is the "Lord's Day." A garden is a piece of common land, and yet it has ceased to be common land. It is an effort to regain Paradise. Such is "The Lord's Day." A bud is not a flower, but it is the promise of a flower. Such is "The Lord's Day." The world's week tempts you to sell your soul to the flesh and the world: "The Lord's Day" calls you to remembrance, and begs you rather to sacrifice earth to heaven and time to eternity, than heaven to earth and eternity to time. The six days not only claim you as captives of the earth, but do their best to keep the prison-doors shut that you may forget *the way out.* "The Lord's Day" sets before you an open door. Samson has carried the gates away. "The Lord's Day" summons you to the threshold of your house of bondage, to look forth unto immortality, *your immortality.* The true Lord's Day is the Eternal life; but a type of it is given to you on earth, that you may be refreshed with the anticipation and foretaste of your rest.—*John Pulsford.*

NEHEMIAH.

xii. 22. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

INTRODUCTION. Historical. Every part of Nehemiah's short history shows that the fear and love of God formed the principal motive with Nehemiah. Here is, first—

I. An appeal to God's approbation. "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also." Nehemiah often makes appeals of this kind. This manner of speaking was an appeal to God—

1. *From man's judgment.* His distinguished abilities had hitherto recommended him to notice in the royal palace, notwithstanding the disgrace of his Jewish faith. But he had now engaged in an undertaking which was likely enough to appear enthusiastic and contemptible in the eyes of his Persian acquaintance. But what then? It was for God's honour, and therefore he despises this shame, casting himself upon the approbation of God. This principle it was that influenced Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Paul. It is the principle of faith rendering an unseen God visible. Such men look for a future "recompense of reward," promised by Him who cannot lie. When misunderstood, and undervalued, and misrepresented by the world, they can appeal to God. "Let them curse, but bless thou." Nehemiah makes his appeal to God, secondly—

2. *From man's enmity.* While one party satisfied themselves with despising, there was another party in Jerusalem itself, who hated and opposed, his proceedings. These were they who, being Jews, had connected themselves by marriage with heathen families—or the offspring of such marriages. To such persons, the revival of pure Jewish manners was very provoking. Others found that their worldly interests were interfered with by Nehemiah's strict enforcing of the Sabbath. It is in reference to their enmity that the appeal in the text is made. Modern enmity. Nehemiah appeals, thirdly—

3. *From man's ingratitude.* It was here that this zealous servant of God found his greatest trial. He might easily have disregarded man's judgment; or have endured man's enmity. But how painful, when the very persons, whom in God's name he sought to benefit, were cold, reluctant, unfeeling! Nehemiah's was no solitary case.

Is there no danger lest appeals of this kind should lead us to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others? Not if we make them in the spirit of Nehemiah: for you find in close connection with this appeal—

II. A contrite prayer for God's forgiveness. "Spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy." Every real believer, while he habitually labours to have a conscience void of offence, maintains at the same time a deep feeling of humility and of his need of unsparing mercy. Let us endeavour to trace the course of this feeling.

1. *After all that he has done for God's service, Nehemiah cannot forget that there is a load of original and actual sin recorded against him, for which no subsequent obedience can make satisfaction.* 2. *Nehemiah finds even his religious actions so stained with sin, that though he may appeal from man, he cannot make them a plea of merit before God.* 3. *He casts himself, with a steadfast faith, on the free grace and covenanted mercies of the Lord.*

APPLICATION. If the despised believer may thus appeal from man to God, what hope can there be for those who compel him so to do?

If the repenting and believing sinner is so graciously spared, how active should he be in serving the Lord, amid a gainsaying and perverse generation!—*Rev. Joseph Jowett, M.A.; abridged.*

Solomon.

xiii. 26. *Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God.*

"It may appear remarkable that one who fell so grievously should contribute at all to the Book of God, nor is there any other instance of the kind; but his sad history adds a peculiar weight of warning to his words; nor are there any books more strongly marked by the finger of God."

"Solomon was chosen of God, and afterwards rejected as Saul had been; he was full of wisdom and understanding, and, what is far more, of holiness and goodness. There is perhaps no one of whom the early promise of good seemed so decisive."

"It has been said, as by St. Augustine that Solomon was more injured by prosperity than profited by wisdom. Yet we may observe, that his falling away is not in Scripture attributed to his wealth, his power and honour."

"We cannot conclude that Solomon himself did not at last repent; but this has always been considered by the Church as very doubtful, to say the least. All we know is, that Scripture has fully made known to us his falling away from God, but has said nothing of his repentance. The very silence is awful and impressive."

"What more melancholy than the fall of one so great—so wise? What words could have been spoken to him more powerful than his own? What eloquence could describe his fall with more feeling and beauty than his own words? What could more powerfully paint the loveliness of that holiness from which he fell? What the overpowering sweetness of that Divine love which he has consented to give up to feed on ashes? Who can describe the temptations to those very sins by which he was ensnared in a more searching manner than he has done? . . . How must his own sweet and Divine words sound to him like music of Paradise to the lost spirits; yea, as songs of heaven would come back to fallen angels in sad remembrance? . . . . It is very awful to think how God may use men as instruments of good that his Spirit may teach them, and through them teach others, and guide them to the living fountains of waters, yet they themselves at last fail of the prize of their high calling. What a warning for fear."—*From Rev. Isaac Williams' 'Characters of the Old Testament.'*

Divine Remembrance.

xiii. 31. *Remember me, O my God, for good.*

Our Protestant forefathers were fond of the maxim—"They who observe Providences shall never want Providences to observe." The truth of this is eminently seen in the rescue of the Church from the Babylonish Captivity; in the rebuilding of the temple; and in the restoration of the people to the Holy Land. High political considerations rather than religious ones no doubt actuated Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes, but "the hearts of kings are in the hand of God." So in the Reformation it has been said that God put little thoughts into Henry VIII's mind for great purposes, just as the preservation of the Church in Esther's time was brought about by a single sleepless night of Ahasuerus the king. "This also cometh from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." The Life and Times of Nehemiah are of much more consequence to the history of the Jewish Church than ordinary readers suppose. Great men are born for great occasions, and eventful times form the training school for public men. Our text is Nehemiah's last recorded prayer, showing us the secret of his strength. It expresses much, but it implies more.

I. Nehemiah's delight in the remembrance of God. The remembrance of God the habit of his life. Note the instructive occasions on which the prayer was uttered. Not in the closet for private devotion; not in the family for domestic contemplation; not in the sanctuary for public worship; but in the daily walks of life—amidst the toils of his office, amidst the reforms he was carrying on, amidst the hot enmity of the world, amidst the plots that were formed against his life. Again and again he prays, "Remember me, O God." He was in the habit of remembering God, or such a prayer would not have risen spontaneously to his lips.

1. *A test of religious character.* The manner and degree in which devout thoughts mingle with daily thoughts and incorporate themselves with worldly employments the special mark of a child of God. Nehemiah specifies this as the distinctive mark of those holy ones who were associated with him—"thy servants, who desire to fear thy name." And Malachi tells us that "a book of remembrance was written for those who feared the Lord, and thought upon his name;" and were thus the patterns of distinguished excellence in most degenerate times Throughout Scripture the remembrance of God is set forth as the active principle of all vice. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

2. *A voluntary remembrance.* Not enforced. The result of a principle. When Solomon says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," he appeals to the first and best affections of the human heart, under the impressions of early piety. "In the days of thy youth" some render "in the days of thy choice." Religion is choice. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Not an appeal to fear. God might have compelled our remembrance—by awful judgments; by outward demonstrations of his power. He asks where he might command; entreats when he might enforce. "My son, give me thine heart." So when Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me," he appeals to the more generous emotion of inward piety which disposed them to obey at a touch, and yield to the gentler insinuations of Divine grace. Nehemiah's remembrance of God was spontaneous and free: it sprang up on all occasions; like water from a fountain, or music from a bird, or light from the sun. It was part of a life—the life of faith and devotion; a life hid with Christ in God. In your best moments you say, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*"

3. *A blessed, though difficult, exercise.* It is difficult amidst the active duties of life to keep up a devout remembrance of God; but the blessedness more than compensates its difficulty. It is the advantage of any useful habit that when once formed it becomes easy and spontaneous; and would require an effort to forego or counteract it. "Use is second nature." Same law holds in Christian life. That which we have once determined upon by principle and by choice we continue to do by preference and by affection. Well for us when the remembrance of God is the solace and delight of the mind in active and in solitary hours. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee."

Not an easy attainment. All good men are painfully conscious how great an effort it requires, whilst sedulously engaged with the concerns of time, to give their best hopes and affections to heaven; to carry the spirit of the sanctuary into the cares and vexations of each returning day. It is difficult to mind the business of two worlds and to do justice to both: to be in the fear of God all the day long.

Difficult: not impossible. God enjoins nothing which his strengthening aids will not enable the faithful to achieve. "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." The history of the long cloud of witnesses attests the practicability of the religious life amidst all the agitation of this world's cares. Patriarchs, prophets, reformers, and martyrs had as many hindrances in their way to heaven as we have in ours.

II. **Nehemiah's devout desire for God's remembrance of him.** 1. *He set a very high value upon the friendship of God.* Not a matter of indifference to him whether he possessed it or not. It was vital to his enjoyment, vital to his prosperity, vital to his existence. Like a crust to a starving man; like a plank to the shipwrecked is the love of Christ to a Christian. "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, therefore my soul seeketh thee." The Psalmist prayed, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." Luther protested that he would not be put off with common things. Much emphasis is in the words, "That I may see the good of thy chosen, and rejoice with thine inheritance"—that I may see it, and partake of it; have the vision and the fruition of this great goodness.

2. *He had nothing to claim in the way of merit, but everything to hope for in the way of mercy.* Not a touch of the Pharisee in Nehemiah. The deepest humiliation characterized his first prayer and his last; a spirit of self-renunciation and dependence. "I beseech thee, O Lord, the great and terrible God, that keepest covenant and mercy." The only word that seems to look the other way is xiii. 14, "Remember me, O my God, for good, and wipe not out the remembrance of my good deeds:" but this was only an earnest appeal to God for his integrity in resisting the tyranny of the nobles of Judah, and maintaining the cause of the poorer among the Levites. As there is a book of remembrance written before God, Nehemiah would not be wiped out of that book. He only says, Remember me—not reward it, not record it—yet he was remembered and rewarded too, and his good deeds were recorded as well as remembered. As says Matthew Henry, "Deeds done for the house of God and the offices of it, for the support and encouragement of religion, are good deeds; there is both righteousness and godliness in them; and God will certainly remember them, and not wipe them out."

3. *He possessed a happy consciousness of his personal interest in the Divine regards.* Again and again he utters the words, "My God."

4. *He attached much importance to the service of the sanctuary.* He maintained altar and priest.

Application. How to attain amidst the business of life this pervading principle of spiritual piety. No fixed and invariable rules. Every man with the Bible before him must in some respects be a law to himself. Generally—1. Stated seasons of retirement ought to be appointed. 2. Occupy the thoughts in the morning with some leading truth or text of Scripture. 3. Form the habit of ejaculatory prayer. 4. Make conscience of your thoughts.—*Thodey.*

A Life's Work Reviewed.

xiii. 31. *Remember me, O my God, for good.*

I. **The review is coming.** All days point on to the day of judgment.

II. **A review is desirable.** It *elevates* a man to take a retrospect of his life, judge his motives, broaden his field of vision. To realize the grace of God within him, to mark the purpose of God towards him, and note the work God has given him to do; all this is well. But here is no elation. Rather is he *humbled.* God is great, and we know him not. That he should employ me—such a man may say—is not matter for pride or self-boasting. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which he has shown unto his servant. And so he *prays* for mercy and grace to be found faithful. Reverence and trust, fear and hope, are in the man who thus pleads with God.—*Enlarged from Dr. Schultz.*

THE END.

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A

HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF

ESTHER.

BY

THE REV. W. BURROWS, B.A.

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HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF ESTHER.

INTRODUCTION AND PREFACE.

The Book is Canonical.

The Book of Esther has been said to be not canonical, but the objectors are mainly found in later periods of the Church's history. For the Jews have ever regarded this Book as canonical, and placed it on the same level with the law of Moses. Neither does there appear to be any foundation for the observation made by Baxter, in his 'Saint's Rest,' that the Jews were accustomed to cast this Book to the ground, because the name of God was not in it. If, indeed, any such custom prevailed among the Oriental Jews, it must have been simply to express their hatred of Haman. The Jews believed that, whatever destruction might attend the other sacred writings, the Pentateuch and the Book of Esther would always be preserved by a special providence. This latter statement was the prophetic utterance of Maimonides, and so far it has not been falsified. This is a fact worthy of being carefully considered, that while many other writings have passed into oblivion, this story of Esther is still exerting an influence. The reasons, also, which may account for the preservation of other writings will not suffice to account for the continued existence of Esther; for it is not to be regarded as a standard work on history, though it gives a most faithful account of Persian customs. It does not record the advance of either science or philosophy, and on its pages are not impressed the glowing images of the poet's mind. We may conclude that this little story of a captive Jewish maiden holds its place in the sacred writings because there is a Divine purpose in its preservation.

While its preservation may be due to Jewish patriotism, yet great deference is due to Jewish opinion and to Jewish custom; for to the Jews were committed the oracles of God. They are surely the greatest authorities on this subject, for they lived near the times when the events recorded took place. If then the Jews have put into our hands the Book of Esther as well as the Books of Moses, we

must not let go our hold of those treasures which they have transmitted. This Book is canonical, showing the vanity and instability of earthly glory, giving a sublime example of self-sacrifice, and describing for our instruction a daring faith in the right and the true, as well as a wonderful power of patient endurance under oppression.

It may, however, be objected that the revengeful spirit manifested in the latter part of the Book is not an example for our imitation. We may reply that it is no more an example to be imitated than Persian luxury and effeminacy are to be commended, and nc more than the vices of Old Testament saints are to be regarded with favour. While we do not lay great stress on the fact that the Itala or ante-Hieronymian version omits tho whole of the nineteen verses of the ninth chapter, we may fairly inquire were they originally in the Book, and wish for Esther's sake that they had never appeared. But this, after all, is characteristic of Scriptural writing. The strong hand of the analyst is present, and nowhere is found unsparing eulogy. The vice that degrades is depicted, though never in attractive colours, as well as the virtue that adorns and elevates. The story of the cruel proceedings in the ninth chapter is no commendation of them; it is a bare recital of facts to make us shrink from even the semblance of evil.

No Divine Name.

The great objection to the Book of Esther is that the name of God is omitted. So De Wette, who objects to all the other books of the Old Testament because of their theocratico-mythological spirit, condemns this for its want of religion. There may, however, be some force in Keil's observation, that the writer neither wished to depict the persons whose acts he was narrating as more godly than they really were, nor to place the whole occurrence under a point of view alien to the actors and the event itself. It is quite true that the sacred writers never exaggerate; but then Keil's statement implies a studied omission of the Divine name on the part of the author. We do not enter upon the discussion of the authorship of this Book, and cannot decide as to the relative claims of Ezra, Nehemiah, or Mordecai. If, however, the last-named be the author, as is highly probable, we cannot suppose him purposely forbearing to mention the Divine name simply for fear of making the characters depicted more godly than they really were. A more satisfactory reason for the omission is that it is a translated extract from the memoirs of the Persian king. It is very likely that Mordecai, occupying the high position he did in the Persian court, would have free access to such memoirs. Then the scene of the Book is laid in Persian dominions; we are surrounded with a Persian atmosphere, and Persian words are constantly recurring. This instinctive adoption of the fashion of the Persian court may be the reason of the singular omission. Perhaps we may conclude that this omission arose from the increasing dread of using the Divine name which was already manifested at this period of Jewish history.

The Almighty has no need to write his name in order to let us know that his wisdom and power have been controlling the march of human events. The name

of God may be absent, but his power is everywhere visible. Traces of this Divine power may be noticed in the Book of Esther. We may observe Divine Omniscience anticipating threatened evil; Omnipotence thwarting the designs of a jealous favourite, defeating and overruling the plots of the wicked. We may see God's special providence in bringing forth his chosen instruments to high places in the kingdoms "for such a time as that" at which Esther appeared.

Authorities consulted.

In commencing the study of Esther it might be felt that it was itself barren for homiletic purposes, and that little help was to be expected from previous labourers. But there is more help than might be expected. Of course all the commentators have handled the Book with more or less of skill, and in more modern times Lange and Keil have brought great critical acumen to the study. The story of Esther has been "glorified by the genius of Handel and sanctified by the piety of Racine;" vividly but cursorily handled by the descriptive hand of Stanley; applied to moral uses by Dr. M'Crie; referred to by Heeren as giving the most accurate picture of Persian customs; and expounded more at large, with that elaborateness which is characteristic of Scotch divines, in discourses by the Rev. George Lawson, Dr. Davidson, and others whose names will be given where quoted. We shall make use of all previous productions, remembering that our work is to be the homiletic expositor of the Book. Its study is interesting, and much useful material may be here found for the pulpit. Pearls lie deep; and, to the faithful and diligent seeker, pearls of Divine truth will be discovered in every part of the Divine Word. Rawlinson tells us that by the Jews this Book is called *Megillath Esther*, "the roll of Esther," or, more shortly, Megillah, "the roll," since it was always written on a separate roll, which was read through at the feast of Purim. We must carefully unwind the roll and attentively read the inscriptions in order that we may find that this Scripture too is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And this we shall attain if the inspiring Spirit direct in our reading, as he directed in the writing of the Book. Come then, O gracious and holy Spirit, bless our labours, and make them productive of moral enlargement.

CHAPTER I.

PERSIAN SPLENDOUR.

CRITICAL NOTES.] **1. Ahasuerus**] Heb. Ahashverosh. **Prince, chief. A name given in Scripture** to Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, and to Astyages, king of the Medes (Ezra iv. 6; Dan. ix. 1). **India to Ethiopia**] describes the king's dominion, but does not definitely fix the date of his reign. The hundred and twenty-seven provinces indicate the σατραπιαι. **2. Shushan the palace**] The king's favourite winter residence. Shushan the lily, the rose, the joy. **3. The power of Persia**] The king's body-guard. The princes, the pashas, or governors of those provinces. **4. An hundred and fourscore days**] We are not obliged to conclude that all or any of the governors were present during the whole period of festivity.—*Rawlinson.* **5. Garden of the king's palace**] The kingly palace, or series of houses, was situated, in Oriental manner, as is customary also to-day, in a large park.—*Lange.* **6. White, green, and blue hangings**] Rather, "where was an awning of fine white cotton and velvet." White and blue, or violet, were the royal colours of Persia. **Beds of gold and silver**] Couches or sofas on which the guests reclined at meals. The cloths were woven with gold and silver threads. **7. Royal wine**] A very costly wine, called the Chalybonian wine, that the Persian kings used to drink. **12. Vashti refused to come**] It was regarded as something unheard of if the queen appeared in public unveiled.—*Lange.* Vashti means the best. **13. Which knew the times**] Astrologers and magicians; generally to be learned. **14. The seven princes**] refers in the present case to the seven Amshaspands, in others to the days of the week, or the seven planets. **22. According to the language of the people**] Obscure. **The native tongue of the head of the house** to be used in the family.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1, 2.

TIME'S DOINGS WITH HUMAN GREATNESS.

Ahasuerus is gone, his royal city has perished, and even his stately palace has left behind only a few insignificant traces. But the simple story of Esther survives. Palaces of marble, as well as mansions made of the less enduring brick strangely vanish. Strong fortifications disappear. Wonderful it is that material structures seem less enduring than insubstantial thought structures. Suggestive it is that the man Ahasuerus moves a formless shadow across the stage while his doings and external greatness are vividly represented.

I. This monarch's unknown individuality. The proceedings of Ahasuerus are only such as might be expected from any Persian monarch of that period, possessing irresponsible power, invested with all the signs of extended dominion, surrounded by courtiers who rendered indiscriminate flattery, steeped in luxury and in frivolity, and like one of the governors in India, who told the native princes that they were but dust beneath his feet. The record of the doings of Ahasuerus, therefore, cannot give positive information as to his personality. His position in the Persian dynasty cannot be undoubtedly ascertained; but his place in the Divine economy is certain. The very weakness of his character was a buttress for the Jewish nation. His love of luxury turned out to the "enlargement" of the Jewish people. His immortality is that of those who are saved from oblivion by the greatness of others. Time sooner or later obscures the epitaph. The name written may be Ahasuerus, and future generations will fail to discover the person indicated. The advancing time will weave its mists about the name, and the individual will be lost in darkness. But a Divine book of remembrance is kept, and there the names of the righteous are written in

characters of *ever-enduring light*. Their names shall shine in the all-revealing splendours. Let men strive to work in harmony with, and in furtherance of, all Divine purposes.

II. This monarch's individuality is only declared by the extent of his material kingdom. "This is Ahasuerus which reigned," &c. His kingdom may be measured by the land surveyor and described by the historian. It extended from India to Ethiopia. He embraced in his rule the borders of India on the one side, and Egypt on the other—an extent of country about two thousand five hundred miles in length. He possessed some of earth's loveliest lands. The fertilizing waters of the Nile left rich deposits on one portion of his territory, and another almost reached the sources of the sacred Ganges, while the Euphrates washed the walls of Babylon, and was fed by streams that flowed near the royal city of Susa. The Black Sea, famous in the history of modern conflicts, and the Caspian, were partly included in the territories over which he reigned. Lands and cities of historic fame were compelled to pay him tribute, and some of the noblest races on earth obeyed his commands. But the moral king is nobler, and has a more *extensive and a more permanent kingdom*. Even the material universe is the believer's possession, intended for his spiritual development. Death strips the earthly king of his royal robes, and leaves him unthroned; but death lets the moral king into a larger sphere, and the results of his earthly conquests he will enjoy in heaven. The kingliest men have owned only a few feet of land, and sometimes not enough land for a tomb, according to short-sighted views of ownership.

III. This monarch's greatness consisted in external display. The throne on which the king sat was a chair made of gold, adorned with a costly carpet, upon which none might sit, on pain of death. There was also a footstool of gold. The king held a golden sceptre in his right hand. Close behind stood an eunuch bearing a fan, and with his mouth covered, for fear his breath should be offensive to the mighty monarch. Such are the pomp and circumstance with which Oriental monarchs endeavoured to separate themselves from, and raise themselves above, their fellow-creatures. This is greatness in the estimation of the children of this world. But true greatness is superior to mere gorgeous externals. The one disappears when the showy livery is removed, but the other abides through all changes. Lazarus was great in his rags; Dives was mean in his purple and fine linen. A great soul ennobles the meanest surroundings.

IV. This monarch's proud position is not to be envied. There are many who would regard Ahasuerus with envy, as, amid a group of attendants, he paced those terraced heights on which the palace of Shushan was erected, as he watched the gentle gliding of the sweet waters of the Eulœus, as he listened to the music of pipers and harpists, as he pleased himself with the natural and artistic beauties of the scene, and as he gazed upon the flat and fertile plains that stretched at the base of the royal palace. The riches both of art and of nature seemed to combine in order to make existence pleasant. But no human lot is without its admixture of pain. From the high places of the earth we catch the echo of those wailing cries that mingle with the mocking sounds of revelry. Kings are but men, and their hearts too are touched by the painful hand of sorrow. The inscription over an imaginative palace is, "Here is the abode of everlasting pleasures and content." But no such inscription can be truthfully placed over the gates of any earthly palace, and certainly it will not describe Shushan the palace. Happy he who wisely keeps the palace of his soul, and finds there the elements of true gladness.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1, 2.

Ver. 1. *Ahasuerus.* The difficulty of stating positively who was the Ahasuerus spoken of in this passage is almost insuperable. The nearest approach to a settlement of the question is the statement that Ahasuerus was one of the Persian monarchs who lived about the time of Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, and must have been one of those monarchs; for only those three are described by Herodotus as possessing the extent of territory attributed to them in the Book of Esther. Most of our modern critics decide that Ahasuerus is Xerxes, and this conclusion is said to be fortified by a resemblance of character. As Xerxes scourged the sea, and put to death the engineers of his bridge because their work was injured by a storm, so Ahasuerus repudiated his queen Vashti because she would not violate the decorum of her sex, and ordered the massacre of the whole Jewish people to gratify the malice of Haman. Now Herodotus is evidently the father of fables as well as the father of history. In the book Polyhymnia, from which the above instance of foolish conduct is quoted, Herodotus tells us of some prodigies which fairly lead us to doubt his trustworthiness. And we may well agree with Mitford when he affirms that some of the anecdotes related by Herodotus "are utterly inconsistent with the characters to whom they refer. Among the latter I should reckon the ridiculous punishment of the Hellespont by stripes and chains, together with executions equally impolitic as inhuman, and repugnant to what we learn on best authority of the manners of the Persians." The assembly spoken of by Herodotus as called by Xerxes in order to deliberate concerning the Grecian war does not resemble that great feast and assembly which was held by Ahasuerus in Shushan the palace, and which lasted an hundred and fourscore days. Those frightful dreams which Xerxes is said to have had at this period do not speak to us at least of the merriment of Ahasuerus in Shushan. This luxury and splendour only seem to point to the Persian greatness which culminated about this period. The two narrations—the one given by Herodotus as to Xerxes, and the other in the Book of Esther as to Ahasuerus—may appear to agree in point of time, but do not necessarily as to the nature of the events recorded. There is surely an *a priori* argument in favour of those historians who lived near the time when the events took place which they record, and who had better means of knowing the characters and events whom and which they describe than later authors. It is a fact to be considered that throughout the Book of Esther in the LXX. Artaxerxes is written for Ahasuerus, and that the apocryphal additions of the Book of Esther give this name. Josephus, also, being such a painstaking historian, did not write Artaxerxes for Ahasuerus without good reason. The name Ahasuerus sets forth the dignity of the man rather than distinguishes him from others. It is a general title of the Persian kings, as Pharaoh, Ptolemy, and Cæsar were general names for rulers of other countries. Why should we institute a painful comparison between the believer who is said not to own a foot of land, and the licentious monarch who reigns over one hundred and seven and twenty provinces? For, it is truly observed, some of the vilest men possessed all the great and large dominions of the Persian empire. But if God has bestowed true faith, unfeigned love, and unaffected humility, he has bestowed treasures of inestimably greater value than all the possessions of Xerxes or of Nero. A man may rule over an extensive kingdom, and yet be a slave; for lusts are tyrannical masters. A man may be a slave in outward condition, and yet be the noblest freeman, the grandest king of all. He is royal who is a member of that kingdom which is to extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, which in fact is to include all nations. Other kingdoms shall fail, but Christ's kingdom of love shall ever endure.

Monarchs will be still adding, and although a man were monarch of the whole world, yea, and had command of the moon and the stars, yet would he still be peeping beyond them for more, more.—*Trapp.*

An overgrown kingdom which in time would sink with its own weight, and, as usual, would lose its provinces as fast as it gained them. If such a vast power be put into bad hands it is able to do so much the more mischief.—*M. Henry.*

Ver. 2. Sitting is a posture common to judges and kings, but more particularly characteristic of the kings of Persia. The Persian kings are always painted as sitting on a throne under a lofty canopy. This is true of them even in the time of war, and in their journeys. Xerxes, indeed, was present in the battles sitting; thus it was at Thermopylæ, according to Herodotus, and at Salamis, according to Plutarch.—*Lange.*

This monarch's palatial residence. Shushan is mentioned in three of the sacred books—Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel—as well as by profane writers. Originally it was the capital of the province called in Scripture Elam, and by the classical writers sometimes Cissian, and sometimes Susis, or Susiana; and was situated on the banks of the river Eulai, or Eulœus. Daniel refers to it in the account of his vision as forming part of the Babylonish empire. Its foundations are said to have been laid even before the time of Chedorlaomer. The remains found on the supposed site point to a very remote past. It was comprehended in the Persian empire in the time of Cyrus or Darius, and to the latter is generally given the credit of being the founder or builder of the great palace described in the Book of Esther. It was chosen by the Persian monarch as the capital of his empire on account of its vicinity to Persia, its climatic advantages, and the great excellence of its water. The circumference of Shushan, exclusive of some outlying mounds, was about three miles; but little more than the name of the city remains. The bases of a few columns, having upon them inscriptions which are deciphered with difficulty, are all that is now left of this proud city Shushan means the lily, the rose, the joy—a name given on account of the fertility of the country, and the abundance of lilies that flourished in the district. This lily no longer flourishes, this Narcissus no more emits its fragrance; the joy and pride of the nations has fallen from its eminence. Thus the flowers of earth perish, but the celestial flowers bloom for evermore. Our Beloved is as the lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon, and he shall evermore unfold his loveliness and emit his Divine fragrance.

The palace of Shushan was one of the architectural wonders of its day, and its size and its magnificence would have attracted considerable attention in modern times. In visiting the ruins of our ancient abbeys we are astonished at the evidences of minuteness and of massiveness which still survive in those gigantic and yet graceful structures. But more profound emotions of sublimity are produced by visiting the ruins of Persepolis, which corresponded to the palace of Shushan in great measure, and from which at least we must gather our conception of what the Shushan palace was like, for nearly all the ruins of the latter have disappeared. In speaking of Persepolis, Porter observes, "Nothing can be more striking than the view of its ruins; so vast and so magnificent, so fallen, mutilated, and silent; the court of Cyrus, and the scene of his bounties; the pavilion of Alexander's triumph, and the awful memorial of the witness of his power." The first object which presented itself was a columned hall of the largest size, which has not been rivalled in space or in beauty by any building either ancient or modern, not even by Egyptian Carnac or Cologne Cathedral. On three sides of the hall were vast porches, supported by twelve columns, while the great central hall had thirty-six, which were a little over sixty feet high. These columns were all fluted, and surmounted by capitals formed into the shape of the heads of bulls, or horses, or wild asses. Heeren supposes these pillars to have supported a roof of cedar, but some

authorities doubt whether this large hall could have had a roof. In the grounds we see on one side what is called the queen's house, and on the other the king's house. In looking at the whole group we may see terrace rising above terrace, and building above building, to the height of two hundred feet above the level of the plain. Fabulous creatures in stone frowning like mighty sentinels; the terraces graced with trees, shrubs, and flowers of rich luxuriance, indicating the fertility of the country as well as the skill of the cultivators. Evidences there were on all sides that the wealth, genius, and productive power of that vast empire had been collected and concentrated to the erection and adornment of the stately pile of buildings.

Shushan the palace. The king had a royal establishment in several cities, but at the time here referred to it was in Shushan, which was a favourite spring residence.—*Lange.*

In this city was the famous palace of Cyrus, which was adorned with marble walls, golden pillars, and great store of precious stones, shining as so many stars from the roof and sides of it, to the dazzling of the eyes of the beholders. —*Trapp.*

Time sadly overcometh all things, and is now dominant, and sitteth upon a sphinx, and looketh unto Memphis and old Thebes; while his sister Oblivion reclineth semi-somnous on a pyramid, gloriously triumphing, making puzzles of Titanian inscriptions, and turning old glories into dreams. History sinketh beneath her cloud. The traveller, as he paceth amazedly through those deserts, asketh of her who builded them, and she mumbleth something, but what it is he heareth not.—*Anonymous.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 3—5.

The Contrast between the Human and the Divine.

Such immense assemblages, and feasts for such a lengthened period, were not uncommon to Oriental monarchs. A similar feast was given by the Emperor of China to the whole population of the province.

I Human preferences. We have not the means of positively declaring why Ahasuerus gave this great feast. The story of Esther simply records the giving of the feast in order to impart unity to the account, and as being necessary to the explanation of after events. But there is good in all; and if there was generosity in this vain and ambitious monarch, it is seen in the fact that he included the lowest as well as the highest in his festive arrangements. But greater still is the Divine benevolence; for Ahasuerus first entertained the magnates, and then condescended to the lowest, while to the poor is the gospel preached. Moral reforms seem first to touch the "small," and then to affect the "great." In primitive times the poor welcomed the gospel, and gladly sat down at the feast of Divine love. What a pity that in these days the poor, to a very large extent, appear to shut themselves out from the gospel feast! The problem now to solve is how to extend the beneficent influences of Christianity beyond the circle of the respectable classes. Ahasuerus surrounded himself with his body-guard—a large and imposing retinue—and with the pachas or governors of the provinces. These were accounted great; but God finds the Divinely great amongst the humanly small. Human distinctions are reversed in Divine estimation. The preferences of earth are not the preferences of heaven. The great of this planet will look small, and the small of human reckoning appear great, when placed beneath the truer light of a sublimer sphere.

II. Human limitation. Ahasuerus gave a feast which lasted one hundred and eighty days at the most; and, according to some authorities, for only seven days. It is highly probable that the same guests did not continue for the whole period of

the feast. Each day there would be fresh arrivals. When one company was feasted, another took up the vacated couches in the festive hall. However prolonged the earthly feast, it must at last terminate. The resources of the hosts are exhausted; the capacities of the guests fail; the viands become corrupt; the banqueting-hall crumbles to ruins; the festivities are rudely interrupted; the songs of gladness give place to cries of sadness. But the feast of Divine love is for all time and for all eternity. The resources of the Omnipotent cannot be exhausted. The word limitation can find no place in the celestial vocabulary.

III. Human infelicity. Earthly feasts too prolonged bring damage to the body, sadness and distress to the spirit. The soul of man cannot find in sensual pleasures its true good. In this book we find that merriment was the direct cause of melancholy. Our greatest earthly joys are too often the sources of our deepest sorrows. Pleasure and pain are closely related, and the one is the parent of the other. The harp hangs upon the willows, and though no hand touch the strings, it gives forth a mournful strain. But Divine joys do not end in tears. The pleasures of heaven are free from all attendant pains. The golden harps give forth no wailing sounds. The feasts of the true Paradise are satisfying; and the deeper we drink of the Divine springs, the more satisfaction do we experience. Therefore saith Divine love, "Feast, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

IV. Human incompleteness. The feast was given in the court of the garden of the king's palace. A very beautiful place, no doubt. We can picture its splendours, both natural and artificial. Its fruits luscious, its flowers beautiful in form and in colour, its aromas sweetly fragrant, and the whole aspect of the scene enchanting; but our best earthly gardens are incomplete. Man makes a beautiful garden, and is said to have made the wilderness smile; but the smile only conceals the silent sigh. There is a gloomy grotto in every earthly garden. The lilies fade, the oaks and lindens and acacias are blasted; the very fragrance becomes offensive. In God's garden the trail of the serpent is not visible, the reproving question is not heard, the marks of defect are nowhere seen. It is perfect and complete; the result of unerring wisdom, the expression of boundless resources.

Here learn—(*a*) *Immoderate pleasure causes sorrow.* Jesus was present at a marriage-feast, and not as a reproving spirit. The Divine love spreads a table in the wilderness covered with sweetest viands, while his songsters raise their joyful notes at the feast. But in the bitterness of the recoil from excessive pleasure, we say of laughter, It is madness, and of mirth, What doeth it? (*b*) "He that is of a merry (or cheerful) heart hath a continual feast." The appetite for more develops with the increase of the supply. Nature requires little, and grace less. Oh that we could reach the Apostle's sublime altitude—"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

A Feast for all People.

This was a glorious feast. But in Isa. xxv. 6, 7 we have a description of one which far surpasses it. It is the promise of a feast made by God, furnished with the very best provision, for *all* people, and, therefore, a feast in which *we* have an undoubted interest. That we may see how much better the Lord's feast is than Ahasuerus's feast, let us consider the Lord's feast, and the benefits which result from attending it.

I. The Lord's feast described. In connection with the feast we notice—1. The place where it is made. Ahasuerus made his in the palace garden; God makes his in a mountain (Isa. xxv. 6). That means the Church of God on earth, composed of his penitent, believing, grateful, and obedient subjects. This collective body, or community of God's people, is called by Moses "the mount of the Lord" (Numb. x. 33). (1) *The Church of God on earth, like a mountain, is generally conspicuous.* It cannot be hid. It is seen by *God* with gracious

complacency; it is seen by *angels* with joy, and affectionate care; it is seen by *men* with avowed contempt; it is seen by *devils* with envy and malice. They envy the honours of this mountain; they hate its sovereign, and are manifestly opposed to its government. (2) *Hence, like a mountain, it is peculiarly exposed to storms*—storms of persecution, temptation, opposition. (3) *But notwithstanding those hostile assaults, like a mountain, it remains immovably secure.* God has promised to watch, to be present with, and to keep it. (4) *Like a mountain, it is extensively beneficial.* A mountain is a shelter from storms; so is the Church. Do the treasures of heaven drop on the mountains, and break forth in springs for the benefit of man? So the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. But let us observe—2. The feast itself. This is undoubtedly the gospel feast. It is sometimes called a *marriage* feast, a great supper, &c. This leads us to observe—3. The provision with which the feast is furnished. "Fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." The provisions thus described are such as must be—(1) *Carefully selected.* (2) *Dearly purchased.* (3) *Supremely excellent and highly gratifying.* 4. The guests for whom this feast is promised. "For all people." (1) *This implies that all mankind need the blessings of the gospel.* (2) *That those blessings are obtainable by all those who come for them.*

II. **The benefits which result from attendance at this feast.** These we find are great and various. As—1. The removal of darkness. 2. Deliverance from sorrow. The Lord will wipe away all tears; all tears of guilty distress, of suffering mortality. 3. Exemption from eternal death.

Application:—1. On coming to this feast, as Christ commands, confidently expect what he promises. 2. When received at this feast, let your whole deportment be answerable to your entertainment. Be humble, thankful, charitable.—*Sketches of Sermons.* 1838.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 3—5.

Ver. 3. Banquets on so grand a scale, and extending over so great a period, have not been unfrequently provided by the luxurious monarchs of Eastern countries, both in ancient and modern times. The early portion of this festive season, however, seems to have been dedicated to amusement, particularly an exhibition of the magnificence and treasures of the court.—*Port. Commentary.*

The description of this feast corresponds to the statement of ancient Persian luxury and magnificence which the Greek authors have sent down to us. The vast numbers entertained at their feasts, as well as the long continuance of these feasts, are points noticed by ancient writers.—*Kitto.*

Such a feast, as that all other feasts were but hunger to it, whether we regard the number of the guests, the largeness of the preparation, or the continuance of time; yet it had an end. But so hath not the feast of a good conscience.—*Trapp.*

A world of meat; every meal was so set on as if it should have been the last; yet all this long feast hath an end, and all this glory is shut up in forgetfulness.—*Bishop Hall.*

Epicurus himself, who placed happiness in pleasure, enjoined temperance as a necessary means of this pleasure. An author of our nation justly observes, that when a great multitude of alluring dishes are set upon a table, a wise man may see palsies, apoplexies, and other grievous or mortal distempers lurking amongst them.—*Rev. Geo. Lawson.*

It is said of the father of Louis XV., king of France, that when his preceptor one day was speaking of this feast of Ahasuerus, and wondered how the Prince of Persia could find patience for such a long feast, he replied, "That his wonder was how he could defray the expense of it." He was afraid that the provinces would be compelled to observe a fast for it. On another occasion the same prince said, that he did not understand how a king should taste unmingled joy at a feast, unless he could invite all

his subjects to partake; or unless he could be assured, at least, that none of them would go supperless to bed.

Great pleasure is often followed by equally great displeasure. Occasions of joyous feasting commonly end in sorrow. —*Starke.*

Better is a dinner of herbs with quietness, and the enjoyment of one's self and a friend, than the banquet of wine with all the noise and tumult that needs attend it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 5. As the king could not furnish a house for so many guests as were invited to his entertainment, pavilions were prepared for them in the palace garden.

Lest the glory of this great king might seem like some coarse picture, only fair afar off, after the princes and nobles of the remote provinces, all the people of Shushan are entertained for seven days, with equal pomp and state. The spacious court of the palace is turned into a royal hall, the walls are of rich hangings, the pillars of marble, the beds of silver and gold; the wine and vessels strive whether should be richer; no man drank in worse than gold. The attendance was answerable to the cheer, and the freedom matched both.—*Bishop Hall.*

This feast was held, not in the outlying grounds, but in the centre of the group of buildings. And the curtains around this central group of buildings would admit the light and secure warmth, —an arrangement most desirable for a spring residence.

Garden. The world has had a great many beautiful gardens; but not any of them can be compared to the garden which Christ has in his Church. The Church may be compared to a garden, because, 1. It is a place of the choicest flowers. There are sunflowers, snowdrops, lilies. 2. It is a place of the most select fruits. There are the fruits of patience, charity, integrity.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

The king made a feast unto all the people. This was not amiss, so that care was taken that no irregulars were found amongst them; for kings should carry themselves towards their people as kindly as parents do toward their children, and shepherds toward their sheep. Are they not, therefore, *patres patriæ*, fathers of their country and shepherds of their people?

Both unto great and small. Pell-mell, one with another, to show his liberality; which he might better have bestowed in another way than belly cheer, and such open-house keeping to all comers without difference.—*Trapp.*

Seven days. Too long together to be a feasting, sith at such times men are apt to exceed and outlash; eating that on earth that they must digest in hell, and drowning both bodies and souls in wine and strong drink, as Richard III. did his brother Clarence in a butt of Malmsey.—*Trapp.*

1. The power of a nation is not its wealth. As individuals, so nations have been ruined by growing too rich. 2. The power of a nation is not its fortifications. Babylon had high walls and good defences, but was overthrown by the Persians. The power of a nation is its virtuous people. Thus—4. The security and peace of nations consist not in magnificent feasts, but in the good government of its people, the happiness of its people, the education and enlightenment of its people. — *Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 4, 6.

SELF-GLORIFICATION.

We speak of Oriental magnificence and Oriental love of display, and do not sufficiently remember that there is an English love of display. During the last few years wealth has increased in England; and with the increase of wealth there has grown an increase of ease, of luxury, and of display. Class has vied with class. The order of the day has been ruinous extravagance. The consequence

has been disaster and infamy. Pride must have a fall, and the English nation must experience yet further troubles if it does not seek a true reformation of manners.

I. This monarch was able to make a proud display, and to gratify the Oriental taste for magnificence. The wealth possessed by the Persian monarchs at this period must have been vast, for at the commencement of every year the princes came with their costly presents from the different provinces of the extensive empire. The satrapy of Cilicia furnished a goodly number of horses as its yearly tribute. From another part came a long train of large trays placed on men's heads, on which were shells, stuffs of all sorts, and pearls; then many trays filled with sugar and sweetmeats; and after that many mules laden with fruits. A third sent a string of one hundred camels, and as many mules, together with weapons of war. And so from all the widely extended provinces the gifts came. And even India furnished a tribute, consisting of vessels filled with gold, and of ornaments, and of wild asses which were prized for the purpose of stocking the royal parks. It is not, therefore, astonishing that Ahasuerus was able to give the numerous guests "drink in vessels of gold (the vessels being diverse one from another), and royal wine in abundance." The vastness of his resources may also be still more clearly apprehended from a consideration of the fittings and furniture as thus described:—"White stuff variegated with purple hangings, fastened with cords of byssus and purple to silver rings and marble pillars; couches of silver and gold upon a pavement of malachite and marble, and mother-of-pearl, and tortoise-shell." The couches prepared for the guests were covered with cloth woven of gold and silver thread, and were placed upon a tesselated, mosaic-like floor. These imposing white marble pillars were stationary, and formed a permanent part of the palatial residence. How magnificent! Shall we not condone his vanity as he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty? No wonder that he was exalted with pride. How much to feed the spirit of self-glorification!

II. But this proud display was a contemptible exhibition. For it showed (*a*) *The materialism of his nature.* No mention here of moral riches. He showed the riches of his kingdom, but never spoke of the virtue of his people. The external was magnified; the internal was dwarfed. It might be, so far, refined materialism; but in any shape materialism is degrading. (*b*) *The narrowness of his view.* Great as was the magnificence of this monarch, greater still, by far, is the Creator's magnificence as seen even in this material universe; and this world is but a small part of his empire. Bring together the treasures and glories of all the palaces and mansions of earth; and, being only a small selection, they but tend to show to the reflective mind the vastness of nature's resources. But all this the monarch's mind did not perceive. Self bounded the range of his vision. He was contracted in his views. (*c*) *The childishness of his spirit.* The beautiful simplicity of the child is seen in its display of its possessions; but the ignoble childishness of the monarch is seen in the display of his material riches. The Almighty does not make a parade of the riches of his glorious kingdom; but permits them to speak for themselves. Yea, he seems to conceal his treasures; and all goodly pearls reveal themselves only to diligent seekers.

III. This proud display has a sorrowful aspect. He showed his riches . . . many days. The display only lasted for days after all. This sorrowful word is written on all our earthly possessions. Days mark the period of our stewardship; for all are stewards. The end of the days, though many, even an hundred and fourscore, will come at last. And then whose shall these things be? Then what account will the poor, elated, flattered monarchs be able to give of their stewardship? Let us then (*a*) follow the example of the Divine King and not of the human. Let not vain breath be spent in blowing the glorifying trumpet. Pearls will be found. Let our wealth—material, intellectual, or moral—speak for itself.

Let the light of goodness shine out clearly, and then we shall not need to say, *See how brightly we illuminate the universe.* (*b*) Let us see the warning word "days" inscribed on all our possessions, on our golden thrones, on our palaces of marble, and over our gardens of delight. This will abate our pride; this will remove the spirit of self-glorification. He that possesses spiritual riches, the gift of Christ Jesus, will find his "days" merge into the bright, unending day of heaven.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 4, 6.

Ver. 4. What is greatness if it be not showed? And wherein can greatness be better shown than in the achievements of war and the entertainments of peace?—*Bishop Hall.*

This is instanced by the Holy Ghost, to set forth the pride and vanity of this great monarch, abusing God's gifts to his own ambition, and priding himself in that wealth which had been gotten by the hard labour of his poor subjects. —*Trapp.*

This was vainglory, an affectation of pomp to no purpose at all; for none questioned the riches of his kingdom, nor offered to vie with him for honour. If he had showed the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty, as some of his successors did, in contributing largely towards the building of the temple, and the maintaining of the temple-service, it would have turned to a much better account. — *Matthew Henry.*

Poor man! he little knew wherein true riches, glory, and royalty consisted.

The princes feasted; the provinces would have to fast.

Upon a pavement of red and blue. These are those things that make us desirous to live long here. Will these save a man from sickness? Do not these outward gauds and gaieties carry away the heart from the love of better things?—*Trapp.*

Wealth, honour, and draperies are poor things to put a dying head upon.

If the feast of an earthly monarch be so magnificent, what will be the feast of the King of kings in heaven? There will be unfading splendour, and pleasures without exhaustion or satiety. All things are ready for this feast; we are all invited. May we accept the gracious invitation, seek and find the wedding garment, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.—*Henry and Scott.*

1. *The folly of building upon "riches" and "honour."* It is idolatrous in principle. It puts the creature in the place of the Creator. It looks no higher than this life. God, heaven, eternity, are all sacrificed for pleasure. It is destructive in its issues. "A house on the sand." "A broken cistern." "A lifeless tree." 2. *The wisdom of building upon the true riches.* It is pious in its principle. It refers all to God. Exalts him in the soul, and renders to him his just honour. It is elevated in its aim. Heaven—eternity. Mean is the ambition of the man who aims at universal empire when compared with the Christian's aim. He aims at the possession and enjoyment of God.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

An ancient father, when he first set his foot in Rome, at that time the mistress and wonder of the world, made this pious observation: "If an earthly kingdom is so glorious, how glorious must the new Jerusalem be!" If you account those men happy who were feasted in the royal gardens of Shushan, how blessed must those men be who are admitted to an eternal feast in Christ's Father's House! Gold and silver and pearls are but poor emblems of its celestial splendour. — *Rev. G. Lawson.*

The owner of this must have been very much prospered. 1. Prosperity should lead to praise. 2. As a matter of fact, prosperity is often hostile to the spiritual life. 3. To permit the pleasures of life to absorb our attention is degrading to the nature entrusted to us by God. 4. It is destructive to the happiness which thus is mistakenly sought. *Application:* 1. To the rich and prosperous: be on your guard. To

the poor: murmur not that prosperity has been denied you: wealth is the eternal ruin of many.—*B. Thompson.*

It is not your riches of this world, but your riches of grace, that shall do your souls good. "Not my wealth, nor my blood, but my Christianity makes me noble," quoth that noble martyr Romanus. And though the philosopher merrily, when he was asked whether were better, wisdom or riches, answered, Riches: "for I have often," said he, "seen poor wise men at rich fools' doors, but never rich fools at poor wise men's doors;" yet wealth may be joined with wisdom, goodness with greatness. Mary and Martha may be sisters; righteousness and riches may dwell together.—*Adams.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 7, 8.

UNWISE LIBERALITY, BUT A WISE REGULATION.

Here is liberality shown not merely by a warmth of feeling, or by a flow of well-expressed sentiments, but by the extent of its bestowals. No one could justly complain that Ahasuerus was of a niggardly turn of mind on this occasion. All was done on a large and generous scale, "according to the state of a king." Costly vessels adorned the festive board, the rich Chalybonian wine foamed and sparkled in the golden tankards. There was no stint at this royal entertainment. The generous man commands our admiration, if not our esteem. And while we seek to show the unwisdom of this king's course of proceeding, we do not refuse our meed of praise for the generous spirit which he displayed.

I. This monarch's liberality was unwise, for it was an encouragement to drunkenness. According to Grecian information, an exceedingly large quantity of wine was drunk at Persian feasts. Now, if the king's provision and the king's decree were intended, or were calculated, to promote extensive drinking, and were a permission to each guest not to stint himself as to the amount of wine he drank, then it was not wise; for moderation is desirable, as all allow. Even strong drinkers admit the advantages of temperance. A certain king asked a philosopher how he was to behave himself, and the philosopher replied, "Remember always that you are a king." This the inebriate cannot do, for alcohol, though it may quicken the imagination, enfeebles both the will, the memory, and the judgment. The drunkard is a slave, and not a king, though he sit on a Persian throne. No drunkard can inherit the kingdom of heaven. The rich wines of earth spoil the taste, so that the spirit cannot appreciate the richer wines of heaven.

II. This monarch's liberality was unwise, even if it were not an encouragement to drunkenness. Alcohol is useless as an article of diet, and wines are drunk for the sake of the alcohol which they contain. Alcohol is treated as an alien in all its travels through the body, and no part welcomes it as a friend, or provides for it a home. If alcohol impairs the power of the physical system, if, further, it blunts the reason, prevents the critical faculty from exercising its fine power of drawing the line between the evil and the good, and lessens the authority of moral control, then surely it should not be received by him who is a self-denying practiser of that which is morally good; then surely the sincere follower of Christ should abstain.

III. This monarch's liberality was unwise, even if it were an encouragement to merriment. The respectable drinker professes to take alcohol, not through the promptings of animalism, but for the sake of the genial excitement and the feeling of good fellowship it promotes. The feast is dull when alcohol does not furnish its exhilarating influence. It excites the intellect, promotes conversation, and gives a charm to existence, its advocates seem to declare. But the laughter engendered by alcohol is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. Yea, it is worse. The thorns crackle and expire without any unpleasant consequences, but this laughter

crackles with a noise that is ominous of coming troubles. An even flow of pleasure, the product of the harmonious and healthy working of all the parts of a man's nature, is more to be preferred than that undue excitement which produces a fearful relapse and a painful recoil.

IV. This monarch's unwise liberality was in some measure atoned for by the wisdom of his regulation. The spirit of the regulation made by this Persian monarch may be brought out by the statement that every man was allowed to please himself. And this, so far, is wise. Let there be no forced drinking at the feast. We may go further, and say, Let the man be a teetotaller without asking unpleasant questions, and letting him feel that his course requires an apology. The social tyranny of the past has received a blow through the advance of temperance principles from which it will not recover; but we still feel too much of its power at our public feasts. Surely a man ought to be allowed to refuse wine in the same way as he would refuse any other article at the table.

Let wise men learn to abstain. Hooker says that "a greater good is to be chosen before a less." Some men declare that it is good to take alcoholic beverages, but it is plainly proved that it is a greater good not to take; therefore let the not-taking be the purpose of every well-instructed nature. If we seek the preservation of bodily health we must not take. If reason is to rule, if the balance of the moral nature is to be preserved, if body, soul, and spirit are to be presented an acceptable and holy and living sacrifice to God by Christ Jesus, we must beware of alcoholic drinks; we must exercise wise and joyful restraints at all festive gatherings; we must recognize the truth that we are greater, and bow to greater things than that of allowing the soul to be slave of the body, the moral nature to be moulded by fashion, and the reason to be tyrannized over by foolish customs.

I. The drunkard's excuses, by which he endeavours to defend or palliate his crime. 1. Good fellowship. But can friendship be founded on vice; especially on a vice which notoriously impairs the memory and the sense of obligation, leads to the betrayal of secrets, and stirs up strife and contention? Instead of promoting conversation, it destroys it by destroying the very capacity of communicating rational and agreeable thought. The drunkard may make his company merry, but they laugh at, not with him, and merely because they are delighted with the sight of one sillier than themselves. 2. It drowns care. But the drunkard's care must arise either from the ill state of his health, the unfortunate position of his worldly affairs, or the stings of his guilty conscience; and, in either case, his temporary oblivion is purchased at the cost of an aggravation of the evils which cause him to desire it. To drink to drown remorse is especially absurd, for all that the drunkard can expect from this course is the benefit of travelling some part of the road to eternal misery with his eyes covered. 3. The drunkard has other excuses. He says that he is so exposed to care and business that he cannot avoid drinking to excess, or that he is of so easy and flexible a temper that he cannot resist the importunities of his friends, as he calls them. Thus he is for softening his vice into a sort of virtue, and calling that good nature which his creditor calls villany, and his family cruelty.

II. The drunkard's woe. This is made up of the miserable effects, as well temporal as spiritual, of his favourite vice. 1. Poverty. 2. Contempt. 3. Ill health. 4. An untimely death. Consider, too, the spiritual evils that spring from and punish the vice of drunkenness. 1. The understanding is depraved and darkened. 2. The will is enfeebled and dethroned. The passions are inflamed and rendered ungovernable. 3. Regard for men, reverence for God, are destroyed. Drunkenness travels with a whole train of other vices, and requires the whole width of the broad way to give it room.—*Clapham's Selected Sermons.*

Suggestive Comments on Verses 7, 8.

Here was no compulsion, either as to the measure or the quality of the draught: every man's rule was his own choice. Who can but blush to see forced healths in Christian banquets, when the civility of many pagans commands liberty!—*Bishop Hall.*

The bounties of Providence are continual evidence of God's tender care towards us, his undeserving creatures, and are to be thankfully and humbly received, and used piously and in moderation. They are given for the support of our nature, to enable us to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits; let us not then render ourselves incapable of doing so by drowning our rational powers in intoxicating liquors, and throwing our bodies out of health and comfort by a worse than beastly use of God's mercies. —*Hughes.*

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.—*Paul, the Apostle.*

There was no forcing of healths or urging of them; every man drank as he pleased; so that if there were any that drank to excess, it was their own fault. This caution of a heathen prince, even then when he would show his generosity, may shame many that are called Christians, that think they do not sufficiently show their good housekeeping nor bid their friends welcome unless they make them drunk, and, under pretence of sending the health round, send the sin round and death with it. There is a woe to them that do so; let them read it and tremble (Hab. ii. 15, 16). It is robbing men of their reason, their richest jewel, and making them fools, the greatest wrong that can be.—*Matthew Henry.*

"The man who would compel his fellows to wound their own souls, by sinning against God, must be viewed in no better light than a barbarian who puts a sword into their hands, and requires them to sheathe it in their own bowels."

We are not told in the present passage that the king on this occasion exceptionally permitted moderation, especially to such of his guests as were, according to their ancestral customs, addicted to moderation, and who would else have been compelled to drink moderately; for the words with which this verse concludes, while they imply also a permission to each to drink as little as he chooses, are specially intended to allow every one to take much.—*Berthau.*

Ver. 8. I. This *shows the common sense of the king.* He behaved much better in this matter than many who are known as gentlemen. Many are lost through being importuned to drink against their wish.

II. This *would test the moral strength of the guests.* Wise men will not eat and drink more than the laws of temperance allow. If any drank too much, it was his own fault; there was no compulsion. He could blame neither the king nor the law.

III. The *tenth verse shows, however, that wine mastered the king.* He would suffer no man to be compelled to drink to excess, yet set the example of excessive drinking. The law provided for moderation, but the king went beyond all that. In eating, drinking, and everything we do, let us remember the chief end of man.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

Drunkenness. Drunkenness is an abomination to God and a degradation to man. By this sin the creature which is inferior only to the angels makes himself lower than the brute.

I. See *the peril of moderate drinking.* It creates the appetite for drink. We have no natural taste for it; it increases as well as creates the appetite. Supply creates demand; it grows with what it feeds on. It gives the appetite entire control. The man becomes first a slave, then a victim.

II. See *the madness of drunkenness.* It beclouds the intellect, destroys the personality, and debases the image of God.

III. See *the woes of drunkenness.* There is the woe of physical conse-

quences; there is the woe of a distracted mind; there is the woe of perverted powers; there is the woe of moral defects; and there is the woe of God's malediction. This is written in both volumes of the Scripture.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

There is no homogeneity between alcohol and any part of man's physical system. Tissue does not assimilate it; the blood cells are distorted in shape and imperfect in action through its pernicious influence; the nervous system is deranged, and the nerve centres are quickened to undue action, by its irritating power; the digestive processes are arrested by its precipitating properties; the *liquor sanguinis* flows with greater ease and purity when not impregnated with its subtle poison; animal heat is promoted by oleaginous substances, but ultimately lowered by the injurious action of alcohol; and the cerebrum can decide difficult questions with greater clearness, and the cerebellum can hold the reins of government with more perfect mastery, when alcohol does not disturb. Alcoholic drinks are injurious, for they impair the body's power of resisting both the approaches of pestilence and the changes of climate. Life in God's world must be preserved on God's conditions of truth, sobriety, and industry. The man who takes alcoholic drinks in moderation may suppose that he will escape damage, but it is a delusion, for the man who drinks his daily drams will not only gradually but surely impair the physical nature, but have a blunted conscience, and a solution of continuity in the powers of ratiocination and memory. We cannot be unacquainted with their properties of producing a pharisaic self-complacency in certain classes.

According to the state of the king. For whom it was not unlawful to feast, so to show his liberality towards his peers and courtesy to his people. But that which was blameworthy in him was—1. His vain-glory. 2. His prodigality. 3. His misspending of time, 4 His neglect of business. 5. His contempt of the true God, not once acknowledged by him or his guests. Lastly, their profane mirth and jollity, without the least note of sanctity or respect to God's glory.—*Trapp.*

In abundance, according to the state of the king, according to the hand = power of the king, means that the great quantity did honour to the power of the king, or that it corresponded to the ability and riches of the king.—*Lange.*

The kingly character. The true king is the able man. Able he should be not only from the abundance of his material resources, and the advantages of his situation, but from the greatness of his moral nature. Every man who is morally able is a king. But this true kingship is only possible by virtue of spiritual alliance with the King Chri Jesus. He was the gloriously able Man. He has such a store of ability that he can make all his followers able.

I. It was *not according to the state of a king* (1) *to make a vain parade.* The man conscious of his strength or of his wisdom need never and will never boast his powers. There will be fit occasion when he speaks of his ability. The sun shines without directing attention to his rays. (2) *To place temptation in the way of his subjects.* Heaven's King tempteth no man to evil; he seeketh to make all kingly. There is a royal benevolence in his nature and royal beneficence in his proceedings. The kingly are those who imitate this blessed pattern. This unkingly earth needs more kingly men of this true type. (3) *To be weak and capricious.* Poor Ahasuerus was not an able man. He was like a poor reed tossed by the gusts of passion and the whirlwinds of caprice. He sat on a throne, but did not wield the sceptre of a firm will. He was himself governed

II. It *was according to the state of a king* (1) *to be munificent.* The hand of some kings is grasping. But the true conception of the kingly hand is to be open in order to spread blessings. The more munificent and the more kingly. Let there be large and unostentatious bestowals of material, intellectual, and moral wealth, and thus we shall be kingly. (2) *To work for moral elevation.* Oh that kings would work for the moral as well as the material progress of the nations! Some do neither.

They pauperize the nations in order to enrich themselves, and see not that the wealth of the people is the wealth of the people's sovereign. The kings are few. We want an increase of moral kings who shall be king-creators. We need a larger royal race to throw broad-cast royal seed from which shall spring a goodly harvest of kingly men. (3) *To embody and manifest moral strength.* That king will not do much in the way of moral elevation who is himself an example of immoral degradation. In order to lift others we must ourselves be lifted. In order to make others able we must ourselves be able. Strength imparted is strength increased. The greater number of kings we create and the more kingly we become. The more we enthrone others and the more splendid does our throne appear.

The common people are like tempered wax, whereon the vicious seal of greatness makes easy impression. It was a custom for young gentlemen in Athens to play on recorders; at length Alcibiades, seeing his blown cheeks in a glass, threw away his pipe, and they all followed him. Our gallants, instead of recorders, embrace scorching lust, staring pride, staggering drunkenness, till their souls are more blown than those Athenians' cheeks. I would some Alcibiades would begin to throw away these vanities, and all the rest would follow him. Thus spreads example, like a stone thrown into a pond, that makes circle to beget circle, till it spread to the banks. Judas's train soon took fire in the suspectless disciples; and Satan's infections shoot through some great star the influence of damnation into the ear of the commonalty. Let the experience hereof make us fearful of examples.—*Adams.*

The drinking was according to the law; none did compel. The king had expressly appointed "that they should do according to every man's pleasure." Of course there is the question whether, if some man's "pleasure" should take him beyond the bounds of temperance and propriety, any restraint would be put upon him? It seems as if there would be. The enforcement of that part of the rule, if it existed, was probably left with the "officers of the house." The dangerous time was at the end of a feast, as we shall see. Meantime, it is enough to observe that there is to be no compulsion; the inebriating cup is not to be pressed on the unwilling guest. That custom apparently had been but too common among the Persians and their imitators. It is not entirely, however, in moral recoil that sanction is thus given in law to the better practice. There is a touch of political prudence in it. For here at the feast are princes from all parts, with their retainers and tribes. There are men here from the mountains who are famous for their temperance and for the strictness and simplicity of their manners. Such men would not be won, but disgusted rather and alienated from the royal cause, by anything like Bacchanalian excess. In prudence, therefore, as well as from, possibly, higher motive, the principle of temperance must have the reinforcement of public law.

It is humiliating to remember that no long time has elapsed in this country since the very same objectionable and repulsive habit against which this public law of the Persians was directed, prevailed in some of the social circles of this country. It was a point of hospitality to press the bottle even on the unwilling guest. The generous host hardly felt that he had done his duty until his guests were reeling, and if some of them were under the table the triumph of his beneficence was complete. You might easily cull from the poets of the last century, both of England and Scotland, descriptions and allusions pointing to a state of things which, happily, has now passed away. This, indeed, is our reason for dwelling on such a subject—repulsive enough in itself—for even a few moments. It is always helpful to observe any signs of a real progress, and, undoubtedly, in the course of a generation or two, we have in this particular made very great progress. Within the whole sphere of what is called society, anything approaching compulsion would not be tolerated, and in fact is never attempted.

Whether we do not, on a wider scale, as a people in fact, and with the force of law, practise compulsion still, and that on the weakest and most helpless part of our people, is a very serious question, and one which, to say the least, we cannot answer with the same confidence. If places where drink is sold to the common people are multiplied much beyond the reasonable needs of the community; if exceptional privileges are given to the sellers; if their houses, with many exits and entrances, are planted in the most conspicuous spots; if they burn the brightest lights in the streets, and are allowed to keep open long after other trades and industries are closed and silent, does not all this and more of the same kind amount to a sort of compulsion to working-people, and trades-people, and thoughtless young people of both sexes? If *the spirit* of that old Persian law were expressed in our own legislation about drink, it would, as we cannot help feeling, be all the better for the morals and manners of our time, for the sobriety of the working-classes, and for the safety of the young. "Men are not made virtuous by Act of Parliament" has grown to be a kind of axiom on this and some other subjects; and many a one rides off on it, easily and gaily, as though he had performed some feat in logic. But the axiom is one which ought to be disputed. It is not broadly and roundly true. Indeed a part of it is untrue; for Acts of Parliament, when they are wise and suitable to the people for whom they are framed, do help, instrumentally, to make men virtuous. So Acts of Parliament, when they are unwise and evil, help, instrumentally, to make men vicious. When temptations and inducements to excess are made too strong for the feeble resistance they meet with, and made so partly by legislation, is it not clear that the State herself becomes a temptress, and to that extent does "compel"? She makes the law under which—in whatever way the responsibility may be shared—there are so many victims. She gathers the tax which intemperance pays to sustain her magnificence and power. She must therefore have some corresponding ability to promote goodness and morality in their exterior forms. She can refuse to tempt, or to sanction temptation. She can keep the path of virtue and obedience, as far as it is in her care, open. In one word, as we have it on the highest authority, she can be "the minister of God" to men "for good."

So much we have thought it right to say in contravention of the dictum of the let-alone philosophy which is so much applied to this and some kindred subjects. But we cordially assent to the view that virtue and goodness in the deeper sense are first of all from above—from the Father of lights, from the untempted, untempting God, all-generous, ever-merciful—and then that in earthly form they are the result and product of the free action and mutual intercourse of human minds. Let the moral and intellectual power of the community, in its full force, come to the rescue. Direct conflict with evil can only take us a certain length even if it be successful. The inculcation and the production of goodness among our fellow-men will take us at once into illimitable fields, and set us on a pathway of progress unending. When we have large increase of knowledge among the people, some corresponding elevation of social sentiment, and some refinement of taste, and some improvement in the structure of houses, and amusements which are not corrupting and yet are really amusing—we may hope confidently to see the same process taking place among the masses of the people, in relation to temperance, which has been accomplished so largely among the higher classes. It is a vast and various problem. It is a long question. We can only do our own part by adopting sound principles, and, still more, by the uniform practice of moderation in all things, because we are of those who believe that "the Lord is at hand." Whether we eat, therefore, or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to his glory.—*Raleigh.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 9.

VASHTI, THE PERSIAN MONARCH'S QUEEN.

I. Her significant name. Those critics who determine the personality of Ahasuerus do not speak so positively about the personality of Vashti. We read her name, but cannot tell either her ancestors or the place of her birth. It may be supposed that she came from Yezd, for the women of this province were esteemed the most beautiful in Persia. The proverb is, that to live happy a man must have a wife of Yezd, eat the bread of Yezdecas, and drink the wine of Shiraz. However, she stands before us in a great measure unknown. She plays her part in the drama, and then disappears from the stage, but does not pass away without imparting useful lessons. Her very name is significant, and means in old Persian "the best." She was good of countenance, and doubtless possessed "the light of that dark eye" which made the power of Eastern women, "wondrous strong, yet lovely in their strength." There was a charming grace in her motion, and a pleasant witchery in her voice. Her "long locks foiled the painter's power." She was so lovely, that after the assembled magnates had been satiated with beautiful sights, she must be brought forth to minister to the pleasure of natures cloyed with the very excess of beauty and the brilliance of regal splendours. The wise man says that "favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Physical beauty is the gift of God, and by no means to be despised; but that beauty is vain which is the only means employed to procure favour, and which conceals internal unloveliness. But surely there may be the combination of physical beauty and moral loveliness. If we cannot find in nature either the flower well shaped and beautifully tinted that gives forth sweet fragrance, or the bird of beautiful plumage that can send out rich music, yet surely the beautiful woman may by Divine grace give forth the sweet fragrance of godliness, and her deeds become so many glad songs in this weeping world. And much may be done for religion by strong-minded and spiritually-gifted Vashtis. Even many professing Christian women may learn useful moral lessons from one whose religious tenets they might reject. Whatever view may be taken of her conduct, this is plain, that she was not a mere plaything for man, that she was not ready to sacrifice the moral sense in order to feed her own vanity by ministering to the bacchanalian caprice of a despot. Many names are given at random, and do not set forth the attributes of the persons to whom they are applied. A woman may be called Vashti, and yet not be the best either physically, or intellectually, or morally. Certain it is that many bear the better name of Christian who are not Christlike. The outward beauty is not increased by the outshining of inward loveliness; the "marred" countenance is not rendered attractive by the pervasive and far-gleaming influence of a soul "full of grace and truth." The Christian should be the best, if not in physical beauty, if not in intellectual grace and power, yet in that spiritual loveliness which can make all attractive. Better than the name that proclaims either physical beauty or glorious ancestry, better than the boasted titles of earth, is that name which tells of Divine grace in the soul, which links us on to the sublime ancestry of God's true heroes, and betokens our Divine royalty.

II. Vashti the queen also gives a feast. It is asserted that Vashti was one of the king's inferior wives, dignified with the title of queen. And this statement is supported by a reference to Herodotus. Now in the book to which the reference is here made we find that the great historian relates that the Persians made this statement to King Amyntas—that it is a custom with us Persians, when we have given a great feast, to introduce our concubines and lawful wives to sit by our side. But the statement was evidently made for an illegitimate and licentious

purpose, and is not, therefore, to be received as a correct representation of Persian customs. And if it were, the appeal proves too much, for it shows that Vashti was neither a lawful wife nor a concubine, for both are said to be introduced to the feasts. The separation of men and women is in accordance with existing Oriental customs, which oblige women to feast separately from the men, even on the same occasions of rejoicing. And this was plainly the custom in the time of Ahasuerus. Certainly it was a special favour shown unto Esther when the king and Haman attended the banquet she had prepared. If Vashti were a mere concubine she would not have been sent for with such courteous formality, and she would not have ventured to refuse to comply with the despot's command. The feast is said to be in the palace, as if to mark the separation more distinctly. And she gave the feast to the ladies either in her own apartments, or in some portion of the royal dwelling placed at her disposal. According to this custom men must feast together, and women must be excluded. But the Divine word teaches the better rule, that men should never so conduct themselves as to make it expedient to exclude the society of virtuous women. For the woman is the complement of the man. Each from each, each to each, should both receive and give. Perfect manhood cannot be attained except there be the refining touch of a woman's gentle hand. And perfect womanhood cannot be reached unless a man's influence is at work imparting strength. But this above all—no man should go where a virtuous and high-souled woman cannot enter. Christianity has still a great work to do in teaching men that all pleasures should be forbidden in which wives and children cannot participate. The feasting is injurious where pure and sensitive spirits are not regarded as welcome guests.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 9.

It is remarkable in this third feast—

I. *That the women feasted within doors.* Not in the open court, as their husbands did.

II. *That they feasted apart from the men.* Which, whether it were of pride, because Vashti would keep state by herself, or of necessity, because either the custom of the country or the king's jealousy would not allow her presence among so many of the opposite sex, yet surely this may condemn our most lascivious mingling of both sexes together in dancing and such like meetings, where nothing is more usual than lustful looks. Lot, feasting and drinking wine with his own daughters fell into sin. The Israelites doing the like with the daughters of Moab were ensnared and subverted. The dancing damsel so inflamed that old goat Herod, that, like a madman, he sweareth to give her her desire to the half of his kingdom.—*Trapp.*

I cannot but envy the modesty of heathen dames. Vashti the queen and her ladies, with all the several ranks of the sex, feast apart, entertaining each other with a bashful courtesy, without wantonness, without that wild scurrility which useth to haunt promiscuous meetings. Oh shameful unchastity of those loose Christians, who must feed their lust while they fill their bellies, and think the feast imperfect where they may not satiate their eye no less than their palate.—*Bishop Hall.*

While the king showed the honour of his majesty, the queen and her ladies showed the honour of their modesty, which is truly the majesty of the fair sex.—*M. Henry.*

The king did not grudge to his queen and the women of Shushan the pleasures which he allowed himself and his male subjects, so far as they could be enjoyed without indecency.

It would have been dangerous to morals and inconsistent with received usages for the queen and ladies of Shushan to have associated with the other sex in their banquet; but they had a feast by themselves, in which, doubtless, they respected the laws of decorum and temperance.

Let not women be locked in their chambers as if they were criminals that

must be locked under close restraint; but let them not use their liberty for an occasion to the gratification of idleness, or a spirit of dissipation. Let them beware of that society that would corrupt their morals or stain their character. —*Rev. George Lawson.*

The name Vashti has probably a connection with the old Persian *vahisti* (the best), or with the related *behisht*. In modern Persian Vashti signifies a *beautiful woman*. Vashti gave the feast to the ladies in the king's palace, *i. e.* either in her own apartments, which also were in the royal residence, or in some other dwellings there which were placed at her disposal for this festive occasion.—*Lange.*

The condition of woman in antiquity was little better than that of a slave. She was the property of her husband, if married; if unmarried, she was the plaything or slave of man, never his equal. The morality of married life, which is the strength and glory of any people, was hardly known. Pompey and Germanicus were singular in the fidelity that marked their marriage relations on both sides, and were famous through the singularity. The utter impurity of the men reacted in a similar self-degradation of the other sex. In Rome marriages became, as a rule, mere temporary connections. In order to escape the punishments inflicted on adultery in the time of Tiberius, married women, including even women of illustrious families, enrolled themselves on the official lists as public prostitutes. St. Paul only spoke the language which every one who knows the state of morals of those days must use, when he wrote the well-known verses in the opening of his Epistle to the Romans. The barbarians of the German forests, alone of the heathen world, retained a worthy sense of the true dignity of woman. "No one there laughs at vice," says Tacitus, "nor is to seduce and to be seduced called the fashion." "Happy indeed," continues the Roman, thinking of the state of things around him, "those states in which only virgins marry, and where the vows and heart of the bride go together. Infidelity is very rare among them." The traditions of a purer time still lingered beyond the Alps; the after-glow of light that had set elsewhere.—*Geikie.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 10 and 14.

A Catalogue of Names.

Names are applied to persons and things to set forth their distinguishing characteristics, and to separate one from the other. The name of the person should represent and bring before us the person so designated. But the names of these seven eunuchs and seven princes do not give us any indication of their peculiar properties. These names are names only. The persons named are lost in the oblivion of the past.

I. Human names are needful to the perfection of the historic record. This Book of Esther is a history as well as a drama. For the consistency of the drama, and to the perfection of the historic record, there must be the record of names. We may wish to know something about the persons named, but the historian cannot always check his narration to describe every person to whom allusion must be made. All he has to do is to give a faithful and general account of the transactions recorded.

II. Human names are useful as being incidental testimonies to the veracity of the history. A long list of names is dry reading. It sometimes makes an unpleasant break in the even flow of the narrative, but it gives an air of truthfulness to the record. It shows that the writer either has much skill, or is speaking about real transactions with which he is familiar. We have no just reason to suppose that these sacred writers were endowed with the worldly cunning which led

them to conjure and insert names for the purpose of making their myths appear something more than mythical compositions. There is the evident absence of all deep art in their compositions. There is a simplicity which speaks of veracity.

III. Human names are recognized by the Divine mind. Language itself must be of Divine origin. We cannot conceive human language having come into existence in any other way. Names, then, are part of the Divine plan. The God of order must approve of those names which are needful to the orderly movements of society. They are plentifully employed in the Divine book. There are distinctions on earth, and names are needful to preserve those distinctions. There are distinctions in heaven, and perhaps names will continue in that sublimer sphere.

IV. Human names may be entered on the historic page and the owners sink away into obscurity. These seven eunuchs and seven princes have for us no deep interest; their glory is gone, their names only abide. How touching it is to reflect that the greater part by far of the race become only meaningless names! We have even no certain data for the interpretation of these names. They have generally but little resemblance to known Persian names. But we may go further. The best known names of the present will be crowded out of prominence by the names of coming celebrities. There are vast multitudes in this country who do not know the names, and still fewer who are acquainted with the characters, of those great men who have fashioned our country's history. So passes speedily away all human glory. The name of Christian will ever abide.

V. Human names may be entered on the historic page without any merit on the part of the owners. If historic scrolls contained only the names of the meritorious, if even of the meritorious from a human standpoint, how short would be the list! The work of the historian would be very considerably abridged. These names are inserted on account of their connection with the sacred story.

VI. Human names may be recorded in a sacred list and yet the owners not themselves be sacred. This number seven was peculiarly sacred to the Persians. If these eunuchs and princes had been of sacred character, if they had been known for deeds of goodness, we may reasonably suppose that the Divine penman would have paused in order to testify of their noble characters. This course is from time to time pursued in the Bible. Many that are unsacred have their names written on the sacred lists of earth. It is difficult, yea impossible, to keep our sacred lists perfect. The names of the unworthy and the impure will get inserted. The sacred list of heaven alone is perfect. Characters, not reputations, are considered in Divine judgments. Not the skilful utterers, but the consistent doers of Divine words will be written on Divine lists.

VII. Better than the celebrity of human names is the immortality of noble deeds. The most celebrated of human names will vanish. Noble deeds alone are immortal. When the names now blazoned forth on the pages of history, or trumpeted in the ears of the world, are known no more, then will be remembered the names of God's faithful ones. For God is not unrighteous to forget their works and their labours of love.

> "Be good, my child, and let who will be clever—
> Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long;
> And so make life, death, and that vast forever
> One grand, deep song."—*Charles Kingsley.*

Suggestive Comments on Verses 13, 14.

It is to be added, also, that mere genealogies, bare narratives of the number of years which persons, called by such and such names, lived, do not carry the air of fiction; perhaps do carry some presumption of veracity; and all unadorned narratives, which have nothing to surprise, may be thought to carry somewhat of the like presumption too.—*Butler's Analogy.*

Every human name more or less historic. Some persons exercise a direct *historic* influence; others are but *incidentally* associated with the great facts of time.—*Dr. Parker.*

In a similar way, many of the driest portions of the historic books — the genealogies, for example — minister to the same end. The mere frequency and copiousness of such matter, untinctured with the smallest trace of mythological influences, and attended, as it often is, with a break in the continuity and interest in the narrative, is, *pro tanto*, a voucher that the writings in which they occur are neither fiction nor myth. . . . We can understand the moderate use which Homer or De Foe may have made of such matter; that is, just so far as to impart a general air of verisimilitude. But whole pages together of nothing but names are so preposterously beyond all imaginable necessities of allusion, and so destructive of all interest in the reader, that we may safely infer that the introduction of such matter, to the extent we find it in the Bible, will admit of no such solution. As little will it admit of a mythical origin; for though myths may be a gradual and insensible growth of the popular imagination, they are yet true to the principles on which they have been constructed and embellished, to amuse or instruct; and neither the one purpose nor the other can be answered by whole chapters containing nothing but long catalogues of names.—*The Superhuman Origin of the Bible*, by Henry Rogers.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 10—12.

False Merriment and its Result.

"When the heart of the king was merry with wine" he sent the seven eunuchs —which refers in the present case to the seven Amshaspands, in others the number refers to the days of the week, or the seven planets—"to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."

I. Here is false merriment. There is a merriment which is wholesome, and there is a merriment which is injurious. That merriment which is the outcome of a nature working harmoniously will do good, and will leave pleasant reflections; but that merriment which is the outcome of a nature where alcohol has sunk into temporary oblivion all unpleasant views, and has unduly excited into delirious joy, will work damage, and when it has gone a bitter memory will remain. The last state of the man's heart made merry with wine is always worse than the state before the heart was reached by the delusive liquor. The false, both in nature and in morals, cannot be without either attendant or consequent evils. Better no merriment than that which is purchased at the expense of future repose. Let the heart of man be merry with the new wine of heaven

II. Here false merriment leads to a foolish command. When the heart is thus merry with wine the head gets wrong. The directing portion of the brain is disordered and weakened by alcohol. Strange freaks are performed, and the merry heart too often becomes a broken heart. Very suggestive is the statement "when the heart of the king was merry with wine." Nothing is said about the head. The stomach is too often the strongest force in a drunkard's frame. Ahasuerus, in his maudlin state, did not dream that his beloved and beautiful queen would dare to be disobedient. He gave a foolish command. His folly brought its bitter fruit. He sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. Let us be careful how and whom we command.

III. A foolish command leads to a humiliating refusal. It never occurred to this proud and merry-making monarch that a woman would venture to refuse, when

courtiers fawned and flattered, and when princes rendered obeisance. In the very climax of his glory and his merriment he received a blow which was more humiliating than defeat on the battle field. What a consternation when Vashti refused to come! If there was one thing more than another calculated to make this king sober, it was the tidings that Vashti refused to come. Our troubles come from quarters where we least expect them.

IV. This humiliating refusal leads to a still more humiliating display. Sometimes fools are so silly as not to see that they have been humiliated. But Ahasuerus had not been rendered senseless by the copious draughts of rich wine; he had just enough sense left to see that he had received a great affront; "therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him." A king in a childish passion. How unkingly! This royal child asked for his queen to be brought, as an over-spoilt child asks for a fresh toy to gratify a surfeited nature, and then begins to cry and make a farcical scene because the request is refused. If there was one manly spirit present at the scene, he must have blushed for his country to see it governed by such a pitiful specimen of manhood. Here learn—1. *That human greatness reveals human weakness.* Earthly kings are not omnipotent. Only God is all-powerful; and oftentimes with the small hand of his weakest creatures he touches the strong man and makes him tremble. In the day of proudest successes we receive the most humiliating strokes. 2. *An uncurbed will must meet with strange rebuffs.* A Persian monarch's command was not to be disputed, and thus he did not learn to respect the rights of others. While we uphold our own rights, and maintain a proper dignity, we must remember that others have rights. Spoiled children must come to grief. 3. *That at Divine feasts alone do we find the best at the last.* Where Ahasuerus and his like preside the best wine is drunk first, and at the conclusion the guests are only too glad to escape without personal harm. Where Christ presides the joyful guests exclaim, Thou hast kept the good wine till now.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 10—12.

1. It was certainly the king's weakness to send for the queen into his presence when drunk. (1) He dishonoured himself as a husband. He ought to have protected, and not exposed, his wife. (2) He diminished himself as a king in commanding that from his wife which she might refuse, much to the honour of her virtue. 2. Perhaps it was not her wisdom to deny him. (1) She refused, though he sent his command by seven honourable messengers. (2) Had she come, while she did it in pure obedience, it had been no reflection upon her modesty.—*M. Henry.*

1. Great pleasure is often followed by equally great displeasure. 2. Occasions of joyous feasting commonly end in sorrow. 3. Although beauty is a gift of God, still one should not make a boast of it, nor yet be proud of it. 4. Pride occasions much sorrow, and often plunges into destruction.

Ver. 12. *Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.* Anger. I. The deformity of anger. What an ugly thing is anger, dispossessing a man of his soul (which is possessed by patience), and disfiguring his body with fieriness of eyes, furiousness of the looks, distortion of the face, inflammation of the nostrils. The Hebrews call anger *Aph*, because therein the nose riseth, the colour changeth, the tongue stammereth, the teeth gnash, the hands clasp, the feet stamp, the pulse beats, the heart pants, the whole man swells like a toad, glows like a devil, tormenting himself before his time; whence many heathens have advised the angry man to look at his face in a glass, and so grow ashamed of his distemper.

II. The disgrace of anger. The Holy Ghost hath stigmatized the angry person for a fool in grain, such an one as exalts folly, sets it upon high to be seen of all, and proclaims himself a fool; yea, the worst of fools; for "proud,

haughty scorner is his name that dealeth in proud wrath;" that is his title. Thus God loads such a man with disgrace. And whereas he thinks by his big looks and high terms to carry it among men (as Lamech did), when he hath gotten revenge especially; the Apostle purposely disgraceth revenge of injury by a word signifying disgrace, loss of victory, or impotency of mind. And, indeed, it is unmanliness of spirit, and little wit in the head, that causeth a great deal of passion in the heart, as we see in infants and sick people. Thunder, hail, tempest, neither trouble nor hurt the celestial bodies; no more doth anger great minds. The tops of some mountains are said to be so high above the middle region of air, that not so much as the dust of them is moved out of the place from year's end to year's end: so is it here. Great spirits and men of understanding are, like the upper region, in a perpetual serenity; or, at least, like the highest planets, that of all the rest are thought to be lowest in course, or like a diamond that is neither bruised nor cut.

III. THE DANGER OF ANGER. It consumes the body; it confounds the soul. Fevers, colics, palsies, pleurisies, apoplexies, inflammation, consumption, are caused by it, while it dries up the radical moisture (that balsam of the body), boils the heart into brine, and, viper-like, makes an end of the owner; who, as he lived undesired, so he dies unlamented, as Nerva, Valentinian, and other choleric kings and persons of great note, who hereby have wrought their own ruth and ruin. And for the poor soul it is indisposed, by unadvised anger, for prayer or any other duty to God or man. He is laid open, like an unwalled city, to many sins, mischiefs, and miseries; temporal, spiritual, and eternal. He that lives and dies in this fury becomes a prey to the furies of hell.—*Trapp.*

Vers. 10, 12.—What has thus degraded the king? Wine. The king was happy in the obedience of princes, but unhappy in the disobedience of his wife. What a disappointment! He showed the glory of his kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty many days; but he also showed that, with all his glory, he could not command a woman. Disputes between husbands and wives are bad at any time, but much worse in the presence of company. Though a mighty king, he was also a poor slave. He drank wine to excess. He issued an unrighteous command. He was carried away by anger. Rich man! Yet how poor, with all thy wealth. A sober slave is more respected, and more to be respected, than a drunken king. "I will not come," said Vashti; and all the persuasion of the great men could not persuade her. When asked to violate our conscience, let us dare to say, No. If husbands expect obedience from their wives, let them be reasonable in their commands. The guilt of disobedience sometimes rests upon him who issues the command. "Husbands, provoke not your wives to anger." They have given themselves to and for you. Wives, do not dishonour those husbands who have chosen you before all others. Perhaps Vashti thought, What means this uncouth motion? More than six months hath this feast continued, and all this while we have enjoyed the wanton liberty of our sex. Were the king himself this command could not be sent. It is the wine, and not he, that is guilty of this errand: is it for me to humour him in so vain a desire? Will it agree with our modest reservedness to offer ourselves to be gazed at by millions of eyes? Who knows what wanton attempt may follow upon this ungoverned excess? This very message argues that wit and reason hath yielded their place to that besotting liquor. Vashti refuseth to come. . . . The blood that is once inflamed with wine is apt to boil with rage. It vexes him to think that those nobles whom he meant to send away astonished with the demonstration of his power and majesty should now say, "What boots it Ahasuerus to rule afar off when he cannot command at home? In vain doth he boast to govern kings, while he is checked by a woman."—*Bishop Hall.*

And *his anger burned within him;* as Nebuchadnezzar's also did upon a like

occasion, hotter than his seven times' heated oven, or than the mountain Etna doth. Moses' anger waxed hot in him, so that he knew not well what he did in it, it raised such a smoke. Jonah was ready to burst with anger; his blood boiled at his heart as brimstone doth at the match. Therefore is the heart set so near the lungs, that when it is heated with anger it may be allayed and cooled by the blast and moisture thereof. Josephus saith that he brake off the feast upon this occasion.—*Trapp.*

We see that God reserves the best for the last. God's last works are his best works. The new heaven and the new earth are the best; the second wine that Christ created himself was the best; spiritual things are better than natural. A Christian's last is his best. God will have it so for the comfort of Christians, that every day they live they may think, my best is behind, my best is to come; that every day they rise they may think, I am nearer heaven one day than I was before, I am nearer death, and therefore nearer Christ. What a solace is this to a gracious heart! A Christian is a happy man in his life, but happier in his death, because then he goes to Christ; but happiest of all in heaven, for then he is with Christ. How contrary to a carnal man, that lives according to the sway of his own base lusts! He is miserable in his life, most miserable in his death, but most miserable of all after death. I beseech you lay this to heart. Methinks, considering that death is but a way for us to be with Christ, which is *far better*, this should sweeten the thinking of death to us, and we should comfort ourselves daily that we are nearer happiness.—*Sibbes.*

Ahasuerus went from bad to worse, as we all do whenever we fail to practise the self-denial of obedience to God. Pride, luxury, excess in wine, mad upsetting of the first laws of nature, these came first; then followed in its order furious anger, which may do anything. He was stung in the apple of his eye. When I am bringing to so triumphant a finish the pageant planned since I came to the throne, when everybody is thinking how supremely grand I am above all men, to be thus humiliated by a woman! Ah, sire! had you respected yourself you would have been spared all the humiliation.—*Symington.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 10—12.

VASHTI'S DILEMMA.

There are great crises in the history of individuals as well as of nations. An arrestive hand checks our progress. We are compelled to pause and deliberate. Such a crisis had now arrived in the history of Vashti. The great turning-point of her life now appears. The question is, Shall I be unqueenly, and thus remain a queen? or shall I be queenly, and become unqueened? Summon up thy heroism, Vashti; all thy fortitude will now be required.

I. She receives an unkingly message. Doubtless the seven chamberlains would give the king's message in true courtly style; but even courtly words may indicate unkingly intentions. It was so in this case. Vashti was to leave the company of her guests, and put on the crown royal, which was a high-pointed turban; and consequently she was to appear in entire royal apparel. We may suppose that her person was to be graced with costly robes of splendid colours from the province of Cashmir, and with garments made of the finely-wrought and richly-variegated silks of the Medians. Pearls from the Persian Gulf would flash their varied and chastened colours. Rich jewels would not be wanting to increase the splendour. And gold from the distant parts of the empire would manifest the vastness of the king's resources, and tend to set forth the charms of the queen's person. Being purified with oil of myrrh and sweet odours, she would emit a pleasant fragrance by her every motion, as well as display her beauty in new and attractive aspects to the beholders. No purpose was to be served beyond that

of showing the people and the princes her beauty. She was to throw aside her self-respect, to divest herself of true queenly attributes, and appear with her face unveiled, in order that the courtly revellers might feast upon her countenance; and thus she was to do that which was abhorrent to an Eastern woman's sense of propriety. No wonder if her spirit rebelled against such unkingly purposes. The kings of time are cruel to their favourites. At first they may be loaded with honours; but afterwards, if any offence is given, the honours are taken away, and the favourites made to feel that it would have been better for them to have remained in obscurity. A despot's guests are not to be envied, for the arbitrary and unreasonable nature of his commands may turn their laughter into weeping. But in the long run despots are cruel to themselves. "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul; but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." However, let us remember that the King of heaven is no unreasoning despot. His commandments are not grievous, and are for the highest good of those to whom they are given. The guests at Divine feasts need never fear that he will send unkingly messages. And should they disobey there will be given opportunity for confession and time for amendment. This merciful king bears long and compassionately even with hardened offenders. Blessed indeed are those who serve the King of heaven, and sit down at Divine feasts!

II. She displays a queenly spirit. If Vashti were simply a vain woman,—proud of her mere physical beauty,—it may be fairly conjectured that the desire to display her charms would overpower the spirit of self-assertion, which some suppose to be the explanation of her conduct. This was undoubtedly the one opportunity of her life for reaching the climax of earthly glory. It was indeed a great occasion when womanly vanity would induce compliance; but Vashti rose superior to the seductive prospect. Many of our modern Vashtis would have rushed to the banqueting-hall, and the spirit of self-assertion would not have been allowed to overmaster the spirit of vanity. Not only women, but many men have sacrificed far more than Vashti was called upon to sacrifice in order to obtain a portion even of that applause which would have greeted the queenly beauty had she, with winning smiles and graceful movements, presented herself at the king's command. But she refused to go, and nobly braved the worst consequences rather than violate her modesty, and appear in public unveiled. For anything we know to the contrary, she may have tried reasonable methods in order to extricate herself from the difficult position. But who can reason with a despot who has been made unreasonable by wine, and whose smallest caprice must not be thwarted? The narrative simply states the result, that she refused to go at the command of the monarch. However, if Vashti's assailants still persist that she was an arrogant and supercilious beauty, — that she was intoxicated with admiration and with her exalted position,—there is something to admire in that daring spirit which was ready to brave death rather than obey a command which appeared to her unreasonable: for she would know that a Persian monarch's rage might mean death to the offender. Certainly obedience is due to those in authority; but the command of conscience is superior to the commands of husbands, or of kings. The commands of conscience should be supreme; but there is a danger lest the voice of mere caprice be confounded with the voice of conscience. The commands must be prayerfully and carefully examined. The voices must be tried. Have they a Divine sound? Then all must follow the directions of the all-imperative voice, though it leads to banishment, to spoliation, and even to death.

III. Her queenly spirit was not appreciated. It provoked the wrath of the king, and his anger burned in him. And the courtiers and great ladies did not appear to her defence. There is ever a natural tendency for the strong to oppress the weak. Throughout all ages women have found it difficult to get their due from men. Christianity has been woman's great elevator and benefactor; and she has been, as is most fitting, its most faithful adherent and propagator. But

still woman's weakness is too often trespassed upon by manly strength. To be on the side of right, if supported by might, excites little or no opposition; but to be on the side of right when it is the side of weakness is to be guilty of folly and of rebellion against constituted authority. Even to this day the inebriated Ahasuerus has his apologists, though they may not mean it; and the unqueened Vashti is followed in her retirement with the pitying sneer of those who assert that she failed because she was not a sagacious woman. The banished Vashtis ought to receive full credit for the heroism of their conduct. Shameful it is that those who profess to believe in persecuted apostles, in slain reformers, and in a crucified Jesus, should always be carefully looking about for some error in conduct, for some failure in policy, in order to account for the non-success of those whom society has banished from its palaces. Not only ancient, but modern critics would account for the beheading of John by the statement that he made a rude and personal attack; for the stoning of Stephen, by the suggestion that he spoke truth in an unpalatable form; for the unpopularity of Paul, that his bodily presence was weak; and for the banishment of Vashti, by the supposition that she was arrogant and unwise in her method of refusal. The Vashtis must be prepared for some depreciation if they resolutely adhere to, and firmly follow, that which they believe to be true, and noble, and virtuous. But this may be their consolation, that time is on their side, and that the Great Supreme accepts sincerity of motive; yes, though the consequent action be not the wisest. For he is not a hard task-master. Let the true-hearted Vashtis rejoice, for their judgment is with God.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 10—12.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Ahasuerus formerly behaved like a king. His wine, and the vessels in which it was drunk, were royal, according to the state of the king; but now his behaviour is like one of the vain fellows. He boasts of the extraordinary beauty of his wife. In defiance of the manners of the Persians, and of the laws of decency, he will now have her brought into a drunken assembly of princes and peasants for a public show. What is it that has thus degraded the great king? An honest peasant that knows how to guide his affairs, and to govern his family with discretion, is more truly royal than Ahasuerus, exposing his shame before his people. Wine has transformed him from a king to a clown, or something below a clown. It is said, that the Spartans used to compel their slaves to intoxicate themselves, that they might show them in their cups to their children, and thus produce in their minds a perpetual detestation of this worse than beastly vice. You have no occasion to bring drunken men into the presence of your children. Scripture gives you pictures of this vice sufficient for your admonition and theirs. It is plain from the instance before us, that a sober slave is more respectable than a drunken king.

She was fair to look upon, and all the princes and people must, for once, be gratified with a sight of her shining countenance, that they might admire the king's happiness in the possession of such unrivalled beauty. Vain man! Did he not know that the most glorious beauty of the human face as of the visible creation, is but a fading flower? Still less did he know, that this beauty, in a day's time, would be no longer his property, and that he would lose the possession of it by his own folly. Let those who have wives, however beautiful, be as though they had them not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Vashti had good reason to beg to be excused from appearing in a company where too many were merry with wine. She is too often imitated by women who have promised obedience to their husbands. They will allege, that the mean-

ing of their promise was that they were to obey their husbands in all reasonable things. If by reasonable things they meant things in which they could give obedience with a good conscience, the limitation would be very proper. But a more frequent meaning which they have for the expression is, things which please their own humours. If these only are the matters in which they are disposed to yield obedience, the promise ought never to have been made; for whenever they conform themselves to their own humours, rather than to the known will of their husbands, they break a solemn promise.

If husbands expect due obedience from their wives, let them be always reasonable in their commands. You see, that all the authority of the greatest king in the world could not make Vashti obedient to a foolish command. She will rather encounter the king's wrath; and "the wrath of a king is like messengers of death."

Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. He was confounded and shocked at the unexpected disappointment. He hoped to show to all his people and princes in Shushan how happy he was, and only showed them his misery.—*Rev. G. Lawson.*

Then took place the succession of violent scenes, so thoroughly characteristic of Oriental despotism, but which to the Hebrew historian was so familiarized, that they appear to fill him rather with admiration than astonishment and horror—the order for the queen to unveil herself—contrary to the immemorial usage of Persia, and therefore the sure sign of the king's omnipotence—before the assembled court, the rage of the king at her refusal, and her instantaneous divorce. In the annual Persian representation of the tragedy of the sons of Ali, an English ambassador is brought as begging their lives; and to mark his nationality a boy dressed up as an unveiled woman accompanies him as the ambassadress.—*Stanley's Jewish Church and Note.*

The queen refused to appear at the king's command as delivered by the eunuchs, because she did not choose to stake her dignity as a queen and a wife before his inebriated guests. The audacity of Persians in such a condition is evident from history.—*Keil.*

While Ahasuerus was intent to show how far the limits of his empire extended, by calling to his court the governors of the most distant provinces, he found in close proximity, yea, in his very house, insubordination to his will. Though he knew how to punish it, yet he could not conquer it, nor turn it into obedience to his wishes. There is, therefore, a power higher than that of man, were he even the mightiest ruler of earth. To disobey human commands may be dangerous, may bring temporal disadvantage, but to despise God's laws is degrading, and will bring eternal ruin.—*Lange.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 13, 14.

The Seven Wise Men.

"Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?" At first sight we may naturally look for it in the palaces of kings, for they have the opportunity of gathering round them the choicest spirits in the realm. They have money at their command; and money answereth all things. The wise man's wisdom is too often a mere article of barter, and is sold to the highest bidder. The prospect of money sometimes causes the wise man to prostitute his wisdom to foolish purposes. But the wisdom of courtiers is not always directed by highest moral motives. The wisdom may be great, but the moral power weak. True wisdom is oftener found in lowly hearts and true. A poor wise man may by his wisdom deliver the city; and yet no man remember that same poor man. Poverty has its drawbacks. Little wisdom counts for much where there is much wealth, sounding titles, and an exalted position.

I. The character of these wise men. In general we may say that they were men of learning and men of business. Observation was joined with meditation to the extension of their knowledge. They were not mere bookworms, but studied men and things. They might judge the times by heavenly phenomena as astrologers; but, like the princes of Issachar, they also may have been "men who knew the times, what Israel ought to do." The perfectly wise man must study men as well as books. It is well to know human law and judgment; it is better to know Divine law. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." This defines the nature of true wisdom. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

II. The favour granted to these wise men. Ancient kings preserved their dignity by exclusiveness. Only a few were admitted to familiar intercourse. These wise men saw the king's face. This earth's grandest King frequented the thronged highways. He was the guest of publicans and of sinners. His greatness was not dependent upon the pomp of circumstances. His royalty could stand the rude stare of the multitude. The eye of faith, though possessed by the lowliest, may still see the face of heaven's King. "The pure in heart shall see, and do see, God."

III. The exalted position occupied by these wise men. They sat the first in the kingdom. Many would regard them with envy. But highest seats are not always the most pleasant. Golden chairs may be uneasy; silken couches may have their pricking thorns. A wise man may sit the first in the kingdom to-day, and to-morrow he may be elevated to the gallows on which Haman was hung. Lofty seats are dizzy and dangerous places. Christ's spiritual kingdom affords safe and pleasant seats for all its subjects.

IV. The noble qualities of these wise men were ignobly used. They knew the times, so as to trim their sails to the best advantage for themselves. Their wisdom was a mere marketable commodity. It was ready to be used anyhow for the procuring of either wealth, or place, or power. They knew law and judgment, but they knew that what was law for the despot was not law for the oppressed subject. Prudence is a virtue; but prudence may be degraded into mere time-serving policy. There is a wisdom which dares to do right, and brave all consequences.

V. The vision with which these men were favoured had no transforming power. They saw the king's face, but did not catch the inspiriting influence of a mighty soul. There must have been in that wide realm faces better worth seeing than that of the weak-minded despot. We cannot gather from this account that these wise men were any nobler for this favoured vision. The face of heaven's King has transforming power. Its light dispels the darkness of humanity; its Divine influences rain down and change the very faces of beholders. "But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The likeness is being now and here fashioned. Each Christian's face should bear the impress of royalty. Christians too should emit transforming and purifying influences.

VI. The exalted position occupied by these wise men was not employed for the advantage of the oppressed. Where is the use of being great if we cannot use our greatness to help the little? High seats should be occupied not for self-glorification, but to lift up our fellows out of the pits of wretchedness. We do not read that these men bent from their proud positions to rescue a condemned woman—condemned before she had been heard, and banished without an opportunity of saying a word in justification of her conduct. Surely it is better to err on the side of mercy. Let those in high places consider the weaknesses and the awful temptations of those in low places.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 13, 14.

Where should the perfection of wisdom be, if not in the courts of great princes? or what can the treasuries of monarchs purchase more valuably precious than learned and judicious attendance? or what can be so fit for honour as the wisest? These were his oracles in all his doubts; these are now consulted in this difficulty. Neither must their advice be secretly whispered in the king's ear, but publicly delivered in the audience of all the princes. It is a perilous way that these sages are called to go, betwixt a husband and wife, especially of such power and eminency.—*Bishop Hall.*

As he had seven chamberlains to execute his orders, so he had seven counsellors to direct his orders. The greater power a man hath, the greater need he hath for advice, that he may not abuse his power.—*M. Henry.*

Of these Persian privy counsellors it is said—1. That they were wise men. 2. They were skilful in the times, that is, well versed in histories, and well furnished with experiences. 3. That they knew the laws, which they had ready, and at their fingers' ends, as we say. 4. They also knew judgment, that is, equity and moderation, without which utmost right might be utmost wrong, as, indeed, it proved in the case in hand.—*Trapp.*

Which knew the times. The good man can say, like the psalmist, "My times are in thy hand." "The sovereign Arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom toward our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair."

Ver. 14. The kings of Persia did not suffer themselves to be seen by all persons on all occasions. These were a favoured few. But *all* that love the Lord shall see the "King's face" in heaven. That will be a happy sight. The sorrows of life will then be past; death will then be destroyed; heaven and all its joys will be ours for ever.

Which sat the first in the kingdom. A great privilege which depended upon wealth, and upon the favour of the king. They who sit with Christ in his kingdom will have no title because of earthly position. It will be because of goodness, and the grace and mercy which saves us.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

He that would mount cares not what attendance he dances at all hours, upon whose stairs he sits waiting, what enormities he soothes, what deformities he imitates, what base offices he does prostrate himself to, so he may rise. The poor man envies the great for his honour; the great perhaps envies the poor more for his peace, for as he lives obscurely, so securely. He that rightly knows the many public and more secret vexations incident to honour would not, as that king said of his crown, stoop to take it up, though it lay at his feet before him. When the Lord hath set thee up as high as Haman in the court of Ahasuerus, or promoted thee to ride with Joseph in the second chariot of Egypt; were thy stock of cattle exceeding Job's; did thy wardrobe put down Solomon's, and thy cupboard of plate Belshazzar's when the vessels of God's temple were the ornature; yet all these are but the gifts of Wisdom's left hand, and the possessors may be under the malediction of God.

How many rich merchants have suddenly lost all! how many noblemen sold all! how many wealthy heirs spent all! Few Sundays pass over our heads without collections for shipwrecks, fires, and other casualties; demonstrative proofs that prosperity is inconstant, riches casual. And for honour, we read that Belisarius, an honourable peer of the empire, was forced in his old age to beg from door to door. Frederic, a great emperor, was so low brought that he sued to be made but the sexton of a church.—*Adams.*

"A great English writer has pictured an imaginary character as having a sweet look of goodness, which drew out all that was good in others. There must have been some such Divine attraction to the poor and outcast in the looks and whole person of our Lord."—*Geikie*

This King's face has not only a sweet look of goodness, but a transforming power of goodness. To see aright this King's face is not only to have our goodness drawn out, but to have the badness expelled, and fresh goodness imparted. By the process of devoutly and lovingly gazing we are experiencing the process of being changed into the same Divine image.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 15.

A KING IN CONSULTATION.

Most men have not the opportunity of being present when a king holds a consultation. Such an opportunity is now presented. Enter the banqueting-hall. Let silence be kept, for the king is about to speak. But we shall find here only that which is to be avoided, and nothing to imitate.

I. The king ignores the folly of his own conduct. There is not here the slightest hint that his request was unreasonable. The demand made that Vashti should be brought into the court of revellers unveiled is spoken of in solemn phrase as a commandment, as a proceeding the carrying out of which was needful to the welfare of the state. Men by a change of words, by cunning phrases, try to change the nature of their crimes. It is hard to bring ourselves faithfully to task. We readily ignore the folly of our own conduct when we are bitterly smarting under its results.

II. The king tries to shift the blame on to others. In this the king shows himself the son of that first parent who blamed his wife and tried to exculpate himself. Adam blames Eve. Ahasuerus is wroth with Vashti. Ahab calls Elijah Israel's troubler. Herod beheads John the Baptist. A man blames his fellows; a man finds fault with his circumstances; a man quarrels with his organization. But the last person a man blames is himself. When he has come to do this thoroughly, his reformation is more than half completed.

III. The king tries to get away from the whispers of conscience. If guilty men were fully satisfied with their reasonings about the force of circumstances and their defective organizations, they would not show themselves so uneasy. The reasoning, if conclusive, would be condoning and pacifying. Vashti's crime was only small, if crime it was; why, then, should the king make so great a commotion over so small a matter? Why, because the voice of conscience was not altogether stifled, and it spoke so as to fill him with trouble. The king's dignity might be touched by the unhappy queen's refusal; but his conscience was touched much more. Men are always most angry with, and most severe upon, others when their own consciences are troubled. And when a guilty conscience sits upon the seat of judgment, the poor prisoner may not expect mercy; for then the severest decrees will be pronounced. A guilty conscience is a great legalist. It says what shall be done "according to laws;" it searches out for precedents and examples; it is very strict in its requirements; it does not temper justice with mercy; it keeps all mercy for itself, and justice, which thus becomes injustice, for those brought to its bar. This king had no right to sit in judgment, for he himself was the originator of the supposed misdemeanour.

IV. This king makes others partners of his guilt. Humanity hedges about a king, whether divinity does so or not. Men flock around a royal standard. That which is a crime in a subject becomes only a folly in a king. And so Ahasuerus had no difficulty in gathering around him the wise men to consult about the crime of a poor woman, and condemn her to banishment. It would have required the spirit of a martyr to utter any remonstrances in the presence of this mighty despot, and a martyr spirit is not often found in king's palaces. It requires ruder fare for its development than the sumptuous feasts of royal tables; it needs coarser clothing than purple and fine linen. The world's great prophets are not clothed in soft

tainment. They move in the wilderness. And so it is all the more praiseworthy when those wearing soft clothing have spirits strong and bold. Courtly martyrs are few, but when found are most noble.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 15.

Instead of at once following out what his anger suggests, Ahasuerus submits his case to the law and custom. This in itself is great and beautiful; this is the victory of culture over crudeness and passion. But in the manner in which this is done here it amounts to nothing after all. We seem to feel in advance that nothing good will come of it.—*Lange.*

Because she hath not performed the commandment, &c. This was a fault, no doubt, but not so heinous as was made of it. The faults of his wife a man must either *tollere* or *tolerare*, cover or cure, and go about to kill a fly upon her forehead with a bottle, as they say. But God hath a providential hand in it for the good of his Church.—*Trapp.*

The combined wisdom of all, it seems, was enlisted to consult with the king what course should be taken after so unprecedented an occurrence as Vashti's disobedience of the royal summons. It is scarcely possible for us to imagine the astonishment produced by such a refusal in a country and court where the will of the sovereign was absolute. The assembled grandees were petrified with horror at the daring affront. Alarm for the consequences that might ensue to each of them in his own household next seized on their minds, and the sounds of bacchanalian revelry were hushed into deep and anxious consultation—what punishment to inflict on the refractory queen.—*Port. Commentary.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 16—20

Courtiers Forsake a Failing Cause.

It is not here asserted that this is a characteristic of courtiers, which may not be observed in other men; for it is a too general custom to push a man or woman down when tokens of falling are visible. But the courtly style is to flatter the powerful, and to speak no helpful words on behalf of the weak. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety, if there be no personal interests at stake; but these courtiers were time-serving counsellors. They knew the danger of opposing the arbitrary commands of a Persian monarch, and therefore they do not try to palliate Vashti's conduct, but condemned her completely.

I. The courtly orator. Memucan was evidently a true courtly orator, and he was put forth as the spokesman of the rest. He plainly knew that it would not be prudent to offer any opposition to the monarch's wild caprice. Memucan by artful insinuation justifies the extravagant whim of this Eastern despot. The orator can do much either for good or for evil. How awful when his great power is directed by selfishness!

II. His cunning flattery. His flattery was insinuating and captivating. He artfully alludes to the extent of the monarch's dominions, to the resistless nature of his decree, and to the vastness of his influence. He flatters by declaring that a wrong done to the king is a wrong done to all his subjects. But he flatters most by assuming that the king's command was altogether legitimate, and in no wise to be disputed. "The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not." Thus it shall be reported, so says the courtly orator; but what says the uncourtly and intelligent observer? Even if he blames Vashti he will not condone the fault of Ahasuerus as was done by Memucan. Truly a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

III. His vicious reasoning. Memucan understood how to make the worse appear the better reason; how cunningly to mingle truth with falsehood; how artfully to fan the king's wrath into a consuming flame; and how, by plausible utterances, to show that the gratification of the king's unreasonable desire was for the welfare of every household in the vast empire. A vicious logical process may be carried out through ignorance, but too often it is indicative of the working of a vicious nature. The heart must be right as well as the head if logical rules are not to be violated. The simple heart will come straight to a correct conclusion where the twisted but cultivated nature will falter.

IV. His time-serving policy. Memucan had regard to the welfare of himself and his compeers more than that justice should be done to Vashti. Thus all are prepared for the sharp verdict that Vashti must be unqueened; that she must have no further intercourse with the monarch; and that another, better than she, was to possess her royal estate. But he carefully refrains from adding, And thus she will have no future opportunity of bringing time-serving courtiers to judgment. These courtiers, in order to save themselves, and prevent Vashti from retaliating, strove, by placing her conduct in the worst light, by showing how injurious would be the influence of one in the highest position throughout the whole realm if she were left unpunished, and by the advocacy of stringent measures, to divest her of all power to do them harm in the future.

V. His unfeeling nature. The true orator should be a man of feeling. His sympathies should go out towards the weak and the oppressed. But Memucan was not a true orator. Certainly he was not a son of consolation. He had power, but it was not power directed by goodness. His gift of speech was ready for the use of the highest bidder. His heart was made of stone. He had a position to maintain, and he would maintain it at whatever cost. The better feelings must be stifled; the voice of conscience must be hushed; a weak woman must be trampled out of existence. Ah, poor Vashti found by bitter experience that an arm of flesh is but a broken reed on which to lean in the day of adversity. Vain is the help of man in the time of trouble. Who shall rise up for her against the courtly speakers and evil plotters? It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in courtiers, in nobles, or in princes.

The Folly of Trusting in Man.

"Cursed is the man that trusteth in man; that maketh flesh his arm." To make flesh our arm is to confide in human wisdom, power, riches, &c. for protection from evil, or for the attainment of any personal advantage. This practice spreads through all grades of society. The king Ahasuerus was guilty of it. But let us remark that this practice—

I. Is idolatrous in its principles. Whatever a man confides in for protection and happiness is unquestionably his god. Let all *covetous*, *ambitious*, and *licentious* persons consider this,—they all "make flesh their arm," and their hearts depart from the Lord!

II. It is grovelling in its aim. It looks no higher than present good, and things altogether unworthy of an immortal spirit. God, the proper and adequate good of the soul—the noblest object to which it can aspire—is neglected and shunned; the sinner's heart departs from him, to pursue wind, and chaff, and vanity.

III. It is unreasonable in its foundation. It is built upon an extravagant supposition, viz., that the creature can supply the place of the Creator; indeed, it supposes that man can do what God cannot.

IV. It is destructive in its issue. "Cursed is the man that trusteth," &c. The man that trusteth in his fellows shall be like the heath in the desert—worthless, sapless, fruitless; "he shall not see good when good cometh," shall not enjoy

it—"but he shall inhabit the parched places," &c. He shall prosper in nothing. His soul shall be disconsolate, like a man banished to some desolate spot, amidst burning sands and trackless wilds, where all is melancholy, dreary, and waste, and where he at length expires through famine. The cisterns he has hewn out are broken.

Learn—1. There is no safety in man. 2. To put your trust in the Lord.—*Sketches of Sermons*, 1838.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 16—20.

Ver. 16. What is the influence our conduct is likely to have upon others? Will many follow our example? Then if we go wrong, we must share the guilt of those who follow us. Offences must needs come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. Vashti's offence, it was said, was likely to be hurtful to all the princes and people in all the dominions of Ahasuerus. The great are under strong obligations to act aright. The greater our position, the greater our influence for good or for evil. Those in the humblest walks of life have an influence. It is true all round that "no man liveth unto himself, no man dieth unto himself."

A bold man he was, surely, that durst deliver his mind so freely of such a business, and in such a presence. What if the king and queen should grow friends again—where had Memucan been? If his cause and his conscience had been as good as his courage was great, all had been as it ought to be. . . . Here they condemn the queen unheard and unconvicted, which is against all law, Divine and human. Was the king's bare word a law or rule of right? and is not a wife, in case of sin commanded by her husband, rather to obey God than man? Here you may see when flattery and malice give information, shadows are made substance, and improbabilities necessities, so deceitful is malice, flattery so unreasonable.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 17. It has been said that the nation regulates itself by the example of the king. It is to be feared there is far too much truth in the saying. Even Christians conform to this world too readily, and think themselves excusable if they are but following the example of the great. It was argued that if Vashti refused obedience to her husband, the ladies of Persia and Media might follow her example. If the queen and inferior ladies refused submission, might not all women in the kingdom do the same? Can any husband in the king's dominions expect greater submission from his wife than the king himself?

Public persons are by Plutarch compared to looking-glasses, according to which others dress themselves; to pictures in a glass window, wherein every blemish is soon seen; to common wells, which if they be poisoned, many are destroyed. The common people commonly are like a flock of cranes; as the first flies all follow.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 18. The king's nobles and princes trembled for their own authority and dignity. They were afraid to trust the good sense of their wives. No doubt their fears were just. What could be expected of women held in the bonds of ignorance and slavery, as the wives of the East generally were, but that they would attempt to snap their fetters? With the women of our land it is very different. They are greatly favoured, they ought therefore to prize their privileges. Wives, be obedient to your husbands. Contention and wrath in families is an evil of such magnitude, that the Persian princes thought it necessary to use the most vigorous and severe measures to prevent it.

Likewise shall the ladies . . . say. Say what? We will not do as our lords command us. Like enough all this, for their tongues were their own, and their wills no less. That free will, about which there is so much ado made, when once lost, the women caught it up; and hence they are so wedded to their own will, saith one merrily.—*Trapp.*

Contempt and wrath. Contempt on

the wives' part, and wrath on the husbands'; wives shall slight their husbands, and they again shall fall foul upon their wives; and the house they dwell together in shall be no better than a fencing-school, wherein the two sexes seem to have met together for nothing but to play their prizes, and to try masteries.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 19. *If it please the king.* Courtier-like, lest he should seem to prescribe to the king, or to prejudice the rest of the royal counsellors, he thus modestly prefaceth to his ensuing harsh and hard sentence. He knew well enough it would please the king at present, in the mind he was now in; and to prevent any alteration, he moves to have it made sure by an irrevocable law, that he might not hereafter be censured for this his immoderate and unmerciful censure, but to be sure to save one howsoever.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 20. This decree would probably inspire wives with fear, but would it not tend to make husbands greater tyrants? The wives will cringe and obey like schoolboys when their masters are present, but will they promote their husbands' interests and comforts? Let your wives share your happiness if you wish them to contribute to it; treat them with tenderness if you wish them to sympathize with you in times of distress. Let not their faults be blamed and punished until you can say that your behaviour has not tempted them to do wrong.

And when the king's decree shall be published. But why should any such thing be published at all, unless the king be ambitious of his own utter dishonour? Is there none wiser than another, but that the king must bewray his own nest, tell all the empire that he was drunk, or little better, and did in his drink determine that against his fair queen that he so soon after repented? He should have done in this case as a man doth that, having a secret sore, clappeth on a plaister, and then covereth it with his hand, that it may stick the faster, work the better.—*Trapp.*

Persian law and gospel law. 1. Persian law was arbitrary, chiefly according to the caprice of the king; and it was cruel. This is seen in the case of Vashti. 2. Gospel law is righteous; it is founded upon God's justice and righteousness. Persian laws, being dictated by whim and caprice, were often degrading in their effects. But God's laws are always ennobling and exalting. God is ever ready to forgive. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Merciful is the gospel. "How often shall I forgive?" inquired Peter; "until seven times?" "Yea, until seventy times seven," said the King of heaven.

Envy. Envy intrudes itself into all positions. It affects princes and courtiers. It is cruel in its nature and design, and seeks always to bring down. It is subtle in its movements, and disastrous in its results.

Wicked counsel. The counsel of the wicked is—1. Natural to a depraved heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God. To follow the counsel of the wicked is to swim with the stream. 2. Popular—the way of the multitude. To put it far away is to be singular. It is not always easy to come out and be separate; yet we must. 3. Pleasing to the flesh. Sin wears a serpent's skin, and carries a serpent's sting. The forbidden fruit is pleasing to the eye and sweet to the taste. But true counsellors will set aside all respect for private interests; will keep their eyes fixed upon the public good; and will seek to avoid injustice, though thereby their own interests be endangered.—*Rev. C. Leach, F.G.S.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 21, 22.

Vashti is stripped of Queenly Externals.

Popular oratory is very frequently only the art of articulating the wishes and desires of the multitude. Skill is required at once to comprehend, as if by intuition,

those desires; to put them in attractive form, and to speak them forth as if they were novel ideas; but the man is untrue to himself who is determined that his sayings shall please the kings and the princes who hold in their hands his reputation for oratory. And Memucan had caught the trick of popular oratory. His words were the expression of the king's then present feeling, and the interpretation of the desires and fears of the listening and applauding courtiers. And we are not surprised to read that the saying pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. All was put in motion. The post-horses galloped from stage to stage. It is the proverbial and figurative statement that they flew swifter than the cranes. The postmasters took from the couriers the king's letters which proclaimed the queen's degradation; which, to those who looked beneath the surface, set forth the king's rage more than his desire that every man should bear rule in his own house. And soon throughout the whole realm the story of Vashti's fall was heard. It was widely known that her crown was taken away, and that she was lowered from her high estate. And doubtless none were found brave enough to speak in her defence. It would be then, as it is too often now, that all forsook in the dark day of her disaster. Those who flattered her beauty when she was queen would depreciate it when she was unqueened. Those who fawned in the day of prosperity would either "damn with faint praise" her daring spirit, or bluster about her disgusting arrogance, in the day of adversity. We do not hear of any consoling or defending voice being lifted up for her help when she had incurred the king's wrath. Let us hope that she was not quite friendless and forsaken. But so far as the narrative is concerned we do not hear of any such voice, or of any faithful adherents. Undefended she fell. Grasping tenaciously the banner of right she was slain. A lonely wanderer she went forth from the palace gates. Or if she still remained an inhabitant of the king's harem, the lowest menials might scout her presence. Her tears might be her meat day and night for a season; but though no human hand wiped away those tears, yet an approving conscience might bring untold consolation in the hours of distress, and she that sowed in tears might afterwards reap in joy. A victim she to a mistaken sense of what was right, as some would declare. But oh, it is noble thus to fall. Better and more glorious is it thus to suffer, through even a mistaken sense of duty, than to let moralities and scruples take care of themselves for fear they should stand in the way of advancement, or help on the spoliation of worldly wealth and honours.

Here learn—1. *That virtue is not always successful in this world.* It is only a supposition for the purpose of supporting a foregone conclusion that Vashti was reinstated. Our narrative does not state anything of the kind, and this is the only authentic history of Vashti's career. Now it has been said that God makes innocence of soul ever prosper. This is true spiritually, but is not always true as the world accounts prosperity. Novelists, in making virtue triumphant and vice finally a failure in this world, simply set forth that which is in harmony with our conceptions of *what ought to be;* but then it is plain enough that all things are not as they ought to be in this disordered universe. The Vashtis are not reinstated; the Josephs are not always taken out of prison and placed on thrones; the Jobs do not invariably find that the last earthly state is better than the first. Johns are sometimes beheaded in prison, and Peters are crucified. It would take great skill to show that Paul had made "the best of this world." He did not seem to think so himself, and he ought to have been a good judge. Certainly it was not "a best" that would be chosen by those who advocate the possibility of making the best of both worlds. Apostles and reformers have endured poverty, persecution, and martyrdom. Genius has pined away in garrets; greatness has been trampled upon by littleness; shrewd business men have ground down their superiors; virtue has been hidden in dens and caves of the earth; truth, with sad heart, has wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins. And the world's

greatest heroes have not infrequently been the world's greatest sufferers. 2. *That virtue uncrowned is better than vice crowned.* This may do in theory, but will not be accepted in practice by the vast majority. In our eagerness to catch or to preserve the perishable crowns of earth we let our principles go to the winds. Still wrong-doers even applaud right doing. And however that may be, an approving conscience will sustain, though time-serving courtiers and angry monarchs oppress, and pass their stringent measures of banishment, of confiscation, and even of death. Virtue is nobler in a miserable hut than vice in a splendid palace. Lazarus was more royal in his rags than Dives in his purple and fine linen. A true-hearted Vashti is richer in her very degradation than the enthroned and worshipped Ahasuerus. Behind the outward glitter was the inward gnawing of a reproachful memory. But behind the cloud of Vashti's shame might be the cheering light of conscious integrity. And in this sense the good man may make the best of both worlds. Earthly crowns may be taken away, but the crown of Divine approval cannot be removed by any external force. 3. *That the path of duty is the way to lasting glory.* If Vashti had possessed a prudential regard to her own safety, her name might not have been heard of outside the palace. But now multitudes have heard her name, and wherever this book travels a memorial will be raised to tell of her womanly modesty and her heroic dignity. And no deed done in a right spirit shall perish; for nothing is lost in the material universe, and much less can there be loss in the moral universe. Those who fight in Virtue's cause may fall on the battle-field, but they conquer by their seeming defeats, and their wounds, by Divine grace, through the atoning merits of the Saviour, will be productive of immortal honours. We cannot follow Vashti in her journeyings and watch her entering the palace beautiful. But this is certain—those who love and serve the better King, Jesus Christ; those who come to him in true penitence and childlike faith, will never be cast out because they have done wrong even, if the wrong-doing was unintentional; and his followers will not do wrong designedly and with the full consent of their renewed natures. The Divine Bridegroom asks not that the bride be perfect in knowledge, not that she be free from error in judgment, but that she be perfect in love.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 21, 22.

Ver. 21. We do not wonder that the king was pleased with a proposal that gratified his pride and anger. The princes, too, were pleased with a law which flattered their vanity and sanctioned their domestic tyranny.

And the saying pleased the king. Pity but itching ears should have clawing counsellors. Memucan was a fit helve for such a hatchet, and his advice fit lettuce for such lips. What marvel that such a counsellor pleased the king, when as he had before given place to two such bad counsellors—wine and anger? How rare a jewel in a prince's ear is a faithful counsellor, that will deliver himself fully, not to please but to profit.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 22. The king not only divorces his queen, but publishes a decree through all his dominions, that every man should bear rule in his own house. This is the law of God.

The safety and honour of a prince is in virtue, not unrighteous laws.

Whether it was the passion or the policy of the king that was served by this edict, God's providence served its own purpose by it, which was to make way for Esther the queen.—*Matthew Henry.*

The king and the princes approve this heavy judgment of Memucan's. No doubt many messages passed ere the rigour of this execution. That great heart knows not to relent, but will rather break than yield to an humble deprecation. When the stone and the steel meet fire is stricken: it is a soft answer that appeaseth wrath. Vashti is cast off.—*Bishop Hall.*

It was unanimously resolved, with a

wise regard to the public interests of the nation, that the punishment of Vashti could be nothing less than degradation from her royal dignity. The doom was accordingly pronounced and made known in all parts of the empire. —*Port. Commentary.*

We do not ourselves wonder, that, when the king's high council—his wise men — came to consider the matter, they decided that Vashti must have her diadem taken from her. They saw, also, that the question was one of near interest to themselves; for if it went abroad, as it was sure to do, that the queen had flatly refused to obey even the king of kings, what had they and the other princes of the land to expect in their own families from the example if this high crime were not condignly punished? But one is amazed at the infantine simplicity of these famous sages in recommending the issue of a royal decree in all the languages of this great empire—"that every man should bear rule in his own house." This is, undoubtedly, one of the most amusing things in all history. One cannot but imagine the inextinguishable burst of shrill merriment which rung through every one of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the Persian empire when this sage decree was promulgated.—*Dr. Kitto.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE WHOLE CHAPTER.

This book presents us with impressive views of man with and without grace; of the great instability of human affairs; of the sovereign power, justice, and faithfulness of the Supreme Being. We now call your attention to the first chapter.

I. **The king of Persia at this time was Ahasuerus.** Commentators differ about him. He was a heathen — a stranger to God — possessing extensive dominions. His was the second of the four great empires. These empires have come to nought; but, brethren, there is a kingdom which passeth not away. Its King will remain in heaven for ever. Let us be numbered among its subjects.

II. **This mighty potentate, Ahasuerus, wished to make a display of his greatness:** made a feast—the power of Media and Persia present—he exhibited his riches, and honour, and glory. Notice his pride. Beware of pride. Pray that you may habitually remember what you are—poor, fallen sinners.

III. **At this feast, though a heathen one, moderation was observed.** "And the drinking was according to law: none did compel." Intemperance is an abomination and a degradation; hence we should flee from it.

IV. **But though the feast of Ahasuerus was free from the disgrace of compelling the guests to proceed to drunkenness, yet did very evil consequences result from it.** It is but seldom that such meetings are free from such consequences. We read of Belshazzar's feast; we read of Herod's feast. In such entertainments God is liable to be forgotten. Solomon, who with extraordinary diligence, and unparalleled success, had examined and tried the sources of all earthly gratification, tells us, in language which ought never to be out of remembrance, that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting."

V. **Let us consider the evil which was occasioned by the feast.**—The king ordered the queen to be brought. She refused to come. The wrath of the king was kindled. The result was a council, then the divorcement of the queen. Quarrels, animosities, and heart-burnings are so contrary to that religion of love which a received gospel generates, that we ought to strive to the utmost for the preservation of the opposite virtues. Christ is the Prince of Peace; let us not only trust in his death for salvation, but imitate his meekness and lowliness of heart.

Two short remarks shall close this discourse:—1. It behoveth us to lead excellent lives, and the higher we are placed in the community the more ought this to be the object of our ambition. Let our lives be continual sermons to those among whom we live. 2. It behoveth us to regard the duties which appertain to the relations of life in which we are placed. "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God."—*Hughes.*

I. The vast extent of the Persian empire. It comprehended all the countries from the river Indus on the east to the Mediterranean on the west; and from the Black Sea and Caspian in the north to the extreme south of Arabia, then called Ethiopia. This gigantic dominion was divided into 127 provinces or governments, each of which was placed under a satrap, or, in modern language, a pasha, who managed its affairs, and annually transmitted a certain sum as revenue to the king. The *seat* of government was variable, according to the season of the year, the summer months being spent by the court at Ecbatana, and the winter months at Susa, or, as it is called in this chapter, Shushan, the palace. The *form* of government in the East has from the earliest times been despotic, one man swaying the destinies of millions, and having under him a crowd of smaller despots, each in his more limited sphere oppressing the people subjected to his rule. 1. Despotism has its occasional fits of generosity and kindness. It is as kind-hearted that Ahasuerus is brought before you in the early part of this chapter. He was spending the winter months at Susa. The retinue of the monarch was vast, and the fountains and gardens were on a scale of grandeur which we cannot well conceive. There, then, the king, but little concerned about the welfare of his subjects, was spending his time, chiefly in selfish ease and unbounded revelry. To him it was of no moment how his people were oppressed by those whom he set over them; his sole concern was to enjoy his pleasures. 2. With all the luxury and temptation to self-indulgence, there was no compulsion employed to draw any one beyond the bounds of temperance. The law was good, but the king himself had too largely used the liberty, and hence his loss of self-control and all sense of propriety. When heated with wine he sent for Vashti, &c. Lessons suggested are—(1) Extravagancies and follies into which men are betrayed by intemperance. (2) That which dethrones reason and destroys intellect should surely be avoided. (3) All the consequences which affect the man individually, and others also, rest upon the head of the transgressor. (4) Intemperance (*a*) blots out distinction between right and wrong; (*b*) foments all the evil passions of the natural heart; (*c*) destroys the proper exercise of the power of the will; (*d*) and often inflicts grievous wounds upon the innocent, as the case of Vashti here already demonstrates. (5) The necessity of guarding against these evils.

II. The evils which arose from the peculiar family arrangements of those countries. We take occasion here to observe two great evils:—1. The condition of the female sex was that of degradation. The married woman was not really what the Divine institution intended her to be, the true companion and friend of her husband. She was kept in a state of seclusion, real freedom she knew not; she was, in truth, only a slave, having power to command some other slaves. She was without education, and generally unintelligent, frivolous, and heartless. She was guarded with zealous care, as if she had been very precious, but at the same time she was wholly dependent upon the caprices of her lord. 2. Yet, strangely enough, in the second place, it is to be noticed that, as if to afford evidence that the law of nature cannot be trampled upon with impunity, it very frequently happened that the female influence was felt by the despotic husband, so as to make him in reality the slave. Not conscious of it, but imagining that he held the place of absolute authority, he was himself governed; yet not through the power of real affection, but through the imbecile doting which constituted all that he knew of real affection. Common history

abounds with illustrations of this fact, and in the sacred history we have examples of the same kind; David, Solomon, and Ahab are instances. There is never a violation of God's righteous appointments, but it is followed by some penalty. From this Book of Esther, it appears very obviously that Ahasuerus, with all his caprices and his stern, imperious self-will, was at first completely under the influence of Vashti, as he afterwards came to be under that of Esther. The whole domestic system being unnaturally constructed, there was, of necessity, derangements in the conducting of it. The despot might be one day all tenderness and submission, and the next day he might, to gratify his humour, exact from his slaves what, a short time afterwards, he would have counted it absolutely wrong in himself to command, and punishable in them to do.

III. The degradation of Vashti. We have to look at the circumstances which are brought before us in the narrative. At a season when sound counsel could scarcely have been expected, and when he who sought it was not in a fit condition to profit by it, the serious question was proposed by the king, "What shall be done to Vashti?" &c. To defer the consideration of so grave a subject to a more fitting season would have been so clearly the path which a wise counsellor would have recommended, that we feel astonished that it was not at once suggested. But the wrath of the king was so strongly exhibited that his compliant advisers did not venture to contradict him. "Memucan answered," &c. Now, with respect to this opinion of the chief counsellor, it may be observed that it was based upon a principle which in itself is unquestionably right, although there was a wrong application made of it. Rank and station, while they command a certain measure of respect, involve very deep responsibility. Fashions and maxims usually go downward from one class of society to another. Customs, adopted by the higher orders as their rule, gradually make their way until at length they pervade all ranks. Thus far Memucan spoke wisely, when he pointed to the example of the queen as that which would certainly have an influence, wherever it came to be known, throughout the empire. But the principle, in the present instance, was wrongly applied when it was made the ground of condemning the conduct of Vashti. The design was to make her appear guilty of an act of insubordination, which it was necessary for the king to punish, if he would promote the good of his subjects, whereas, in reality, she had upon her side all the authority of law and custom, and was to be made the victim both of the ungovernable wrath of the king, who was beside himself with wine, and also of flatterers who, to gratify him, would do wrong to the innocent. See here the danger of flattery.

Let us extract some practical lessons from our subject. 1. The inadequacy of all earthly good to make man truly happy. Surveying the whole scene portrayed in the early verses of this chapter, we might imagine that the sovereign who ruled over this empire, upon whose nod the interests of so many millions depended, and for whose pleasure the product of so many various climes could be gathered together, had surely all the elements of enjoyment at his command. . . And yet we must say that the mightiest sovereign of his time, with 127 provinces subject to him, with princes serving him, and slaves kissing the dust at his feet, was not half so happy as the humblest individual here, who knows what is meant by the comforts of home, where he is in the midst of those who love him. 2. A few remarks may be offered upon the domestic question here settled by the king and his counsellors, as to the supremacy of man in his own house. How could they pronounce a sound judgment upon a question which their customs prevented them from rightly knowing? 3. We have in the text a law spoken of which changeth not. And, my friends, there is such a law, but it is not the law of the Medes and Persians, it is the law of the Eternal. Jehovah's law changeth not. And what does it say? "This do and live." "Cursed is every one that continueth

not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." That seals us all up under wrath. But we turn the page, and we read and see that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." And is not this our conclusion, then—"I will flee from the curse of the immutable law, and shelter myself under the righteousness of Christ, which is also perfect and immutable, that through him and from him I may have mercy and eternal life"?—*Dr. Davidson.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I

Power. Pompey boasted, that, with one stamp of his foot, he could rouse all Italy to arms; with one scratch of his pen, Ahasuerus could call to his assistance the forces of 127 provinces; but God, by one word of his mouth, one movement of his will, can summon the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and the undiscovered worlds to his aid, or bring new creatures into being to do his will.

Dignity. A French doctor once taunted Flechier, Bishop of Nismes, who had been a tallow-chandler in his youth, with the meanness of his origin; to which he replied, "If you had been born in the same condition that I was, you would still have been but a maker of candles."

Great men. Columbus was the son of a weaver, and a weaver himself. Cervantes was a common soldier. Homer was the son of a small farmer. Demosthenes was the son of a cutler. Terence was a slave. Oliver Cromwell was the son of a London brewer. Howard was an apprentice to a grocer. Franklin was a journeyman printer, and son of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler. Dr. Thomas, Bishop of Worcester, was the son of a linen-draper. Daniel Defoe was a hostler, and son of a butcher. Whitfield was the son of an innkeeper at Gloucester. Virgil was the son of a porter. Horace was the son of a shopkeeper. Shakespeare was the son of a woolstapler. Milton was the son of a money scrivener. Robert Burns was a ploughman in Ayrshire. Yet all these rose to eminence.

How to make a feast. "Lord Chief Justice Hall frequently invited his poor neighbours to dinner, and made them sit at table with himself. If any of them were sick, so that they could not come, he would send provisions to them warm from his table."

Favour of God. It was the saying of a wise Roman, "I had rather have the esteem of the Emperor Augustus than his gifts;" for he was an honourable, understanding prince, and his favour very honourable. When Cyrus gave one of his friends a kiss, and another a wedge of gold, he that had the gold envied him that had the kiss as a greater expression of his favour. So the true Christian prefers the privilege of acceptance with God to the possession of any earthly comfort, for in the light of his countenance is life, and his favour is as the cloud of the latter rain.—*Butler.*

Pride of wealth. Alcibiades was one day boasting of his wealth and great estate, when Socrates placed a map before him, and asked him to find Attica. It was insignificant on the map; but he found it. "Now," said the philosopher, "point out your own estate." "It is too small to be distinguished in so little a space," was the answer. "See, then!" said Socrates, "how much you are affected about an imperceptible point of land."

Your bags of gold should be ballast in your vessel to keep her always steady, instead of being topsails to your masts to make your vessel giddy. Give me that distinguished person, who is rather pressed down under the weight of all his honours, than puffed up with the blast thereof. It has been observed by those who are experienced in the sport of angling, that the smallest fishes bite the fastest. Oh, how few *great men* do we find so much as nibbling at the gospel hook.—*Secker.*

Abuse of wealth. I am no advocate for meanness of private habitation. I would fain introduce into it all magnificence, care, and beauty, when they are possible; but I would not have that useless expense in unnoticed fineries or formalities—cornicing of ceilings, and graining of doors, and fringing of curtains, and thousands of such things—which have become foolishly and apathetically habitual. . . . I speak from experience: I know what it is to live in a cottage with a deal floor and roof, and a hearth of mica slate; I know it to be in many respects healthier and happier than living between a Turkey carpet and a gilded ceiling, beside a steel grate and polished fender. I do not say that such things have not their place and propriety; but I say this emphatically, that a tenth part of the expense which is sacrificed in domestic vanities, if not absolutely and meaninglessly lost in domestic comforts and encumbrances, would, if collectively afforded and wisely employed, build a marble church for every town in England.—*Ruskin.*

Danger. "A boy climbing among the Alps saw some flowers on the verge of a precipice, and sprang forward to get them. The guide shouted his warnings; but the heedless boy grasped the flowers, and fell a thousand feet upon the rocks below with them in his hand. It was a dear price for such frail things, but he is not the only victim of such folly."

Danger of prosperity. When Crates threw his gold into the sea, he cried out, *Ego perdam te, ne tu perdas me*, that is, "I will destroy you, lest

you should destroy me." Thus, if the world be not put to death here, it will put us to death hereafter. Then we shall say, as Cardinal Wolsey, when discarded by his prince and abandoned to the fury of his enemies: "If I had served my God as faithfully as my king, he would not have thus forsaken me." Poor man! all the perfumes on earth are unable to prevail over the stench of hell.—*Secker.*

In a long sunshine of outward prosperity, the dust of our inward corruptions is apt to fly about and lift itself up. Sanctified affliction, like seasonable rain, lays the dust, and softens the soul. —*Salter.*

When fire is put to green wood there comes out abundance of watery stuff that before appeared not; when the pond is empty, the mud, the filth, and toads come to light. The snow covers many a dunghill, so doth prosperity many a rotten heart. It is easy to wade in a warm bath, and every bird can sing in a sunshiny day. Hard weather tries what health we have; afflictions try what sap we have, what grace we have. Withered leaves soon fall off in windy weather, rotten boughs quickly break with heavy weights, &c.—*Brooks.*

Some of you glory in your shame, that you have drunk down your companions, and carried it away—the honour of a sponge or a tub, which can drink up or hold liquor as well as you.—*Baxter.*

We commend wine for the excellency of it; but if it could speak, as it can take away speech, it would complain that, by our abuse, both the excellencies are lost; for the excellent man doth so spoil the excellent wine, until the excellent wine hath spoiled the excellent man. Oh, that a man should take pleasure in that which makes him no man; that he should let a thief in at his mouth to steal away his wit; that for a little throat indulgence he should kill in himself both the first Adam—his reason, and even the second Adam — his regeneration, and so commit two murders at once.—*Adams.*

An earnest young minister was in the house of a rich friend. He was pressed to take wine, but refused. It was again pressed upon him. At length he yielded to their importunities, and drank a little. Gradually he formed a liking for wine, and at length began taking far too much. By degrees, and almost before he was aware of it, he became a drunkard. He was degraded from his office of the ministry, and sank lower and lower. Years after he had been pressed to drink by his rich friend, he came again to his door; this time to beg for a little food, and was ordered away as a drunken vagabond.

Joseph Ralston, of Philipsburg, Penn., met with a horrible death by freezing. He had been drinking freely, and had, while drunk, to wade the Moshandoo Creek; but, ere he proceeded two-thirds of the way, his limbs refused to perform their office. He grasped a bough of an overhanging tree, unable to advance farther, and soon the fast-congealing water cemented close about him—a tomb of ice which stretched from shore to shore. Two days after he was found there rigid as an icicle, his knees embedded in a sheet of the frozen element seven inches thick, his body inclined a little forwards, his hands clutching the boughs, eyes astare, and despair pictured on his features.—*Pittsburgh Despatch.*

God trieth men's love to him by their keeping his commandments. It was the aggravation of the first sin that they would not deny so small a thing as the forbidden fruit, in obedience to God! And so it is of thine, that will not leave a forbidden cup for him. O miserable wretch! dost thou not know thou canst not be Christ's disciple if thou forsake not all for him, and hate not even thy life in comparison of him, and wouldst die rather than forsake him? And thou like to lay down thy life for him, who wilt not leave a cup of drink for him? Canst thou burn at a stake for him, that canst not leave an alehouse, or vain company, or excess, for him? What a sentence of condemnation dost thou pass upon thyself!—*Baxter.*

Not in the day of thy drunkenness only dost thou undergo the harm of drunkenness, but also after that day. And as when a fever is passed by, the mischievous consequences of the fever remain, so also when drunkenness is passed, the disturbance of intoxication is whirling round both body and soul. And while the wretched body lies paralyzed, like the hull of a vessel after a shipwreck, the soul, yet more miserable than it, even when this is ended, stirs up the storm and kindles desire; and when one seems to be sober, then most of all is he mad, imagining to himself wine and casks, cups and goblets.—*Chrysostom.*

"If you have glutted yourselves with worldly pleasures, it is no wonder that you should find an unsavoury taste in spiritual delights. Doves that are already filled find cherries bitter."—*J. Lyth, D.D.*

Bountiful King. The Lord, like a most bountiful king, will be angry if any man will ask a small thing at his hands; because he had rather give things of great worth than of small value. His goodness is infinite.—*Powell.*

Fulness of Christ. I have found it an interesting thing to stand at the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think, that although it has been flowing on for 6000 years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want. And when I have watched the rise of the sun as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or, in a sky draped with golden curtains, sprung up from his ocean bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and planted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvest of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliantly as ever; his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his floods of lightness fail, for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these but images of the fulness that is in Christ! Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing! For when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness, or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the

fulness of Christ shall flow on through eternity in the bliss of the redeemed. Blessed Saviour! Image of God! Divine Redeemer! In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. What thou hast gone to heaven to prepare, may we be called up at death to enjoy!—*Dr. Guthrie.*

Wife. "And now let us see whether the word 'wife' has not a lesson. It literally means a weaver. The wife is the person who weaves. Before our great cotton and cloth factories arose, one of the principal employments in every house was the fabrication of clothing: every family made its own. The wool was spun into threads by the girls, who were therefore called *spinsters*; the thread was woven into cloth by their mother, who, accordingly, was called the weaver, or the wife; and another remnant of this old truth we discover in the word 'heirloom,' applied to any old piece of furniture which has come down to us from our ancestors, and which, though it may be a chair or bed, shows that a loom was an important article in every house. Thus the word 'wife' means weaver; and, as Trench well remarks, 'in the word itself is wrapped up a hint of earnest, indoor, stay-at-home occupation, as being fitted for her who bears the name.'"

Pleasures. The pleasures of the world surfeit with satisfying, while heavenly pleasures satisfy without surfeiting. The surfeited nature of the sensualist requires a constantly increasing stimulus to rouse his used-up powers, but with each advance in Christian enjoyment there is an increased power to appreciate heavenly joys. The pleasures of the world are like the kiss of Judas, given but to betray; the pleasures of heaven make the soul bright and beautiful, as when the face of Moses was transformed by the vision of God.—*J. G. Pilkington.*

Pleasures. Pleasures, like the rose, are sweet, but prickly; the honey doth not countervail the sting; all the world's delights are vanity, and end in vexation; like Judas, while they kiss, they betray. I would neither be a stone nor an epicure; allow of no pleasure, nor give way to all; they are good sauce, but naught to make a meal of. I may use them sometimes for digestion, never for food.—*Henshaw.*

Price of pleasure. Goethe, in his "Faust," introduces for his hero a student longing for the pleasures of knowledge. The devil appears, to seduce him from his pursuit; Faust is to have all possible sensual enjoyment in life, but is to pay for it by yielding his soul to the devil at last. At the end, Mephistopheles, jealous of his claim, appears and carries off his victim, the student's lost soul.

Anger. I am naturally as irritable as any; but when I find anger, or passion, or any other evil temper, arise in my mind, immediately I go to my Redeemer, and, confessing my sins, I give myself up to be managed by him.—*Clarke.*

Anger subdued. Two good men on some occasion had a warm dispute; and remembering the exhortation of the Apostle, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," just before sunset one of them went to the other, and knocking at the door, his offended friend came and opened it, and seeing who it was, started back in astonishment and surprise; the other, at the same time, cried out, "The sun is almost down." This unexpected salutation softened the heart of his friend into affection, and he returned for answer, "Come in, brother, come in." What a happy method of conciliating matters, of redressing grievances, and of reconciling brethren!—*Arvine.*

Hypocrisy. A very capital painter in London exhibited a piece representing a friar habited in his canonicals. View the painting at a distance, and you would think the friar to be in a praying attitude; his hands are clasped together and held horizontally to his breast, his eyes meekly demissed like those of the publican in the gospel: and the good man appears to be quite absorbed in humble adoration and devout recollection. But take a nearer survey, and the deception vanishes; the book which seemed to be before him is discovered to be a punch-bowl, into which the wretch is all the while in reality only squeezing a lemon. How lively a representation of a hypocrite!—*Salter.*

Idols. A man's idol is not necessarily an image of gold; it may be a child of clay, the fruit of his own loins, or the wife of his bosom; it may be wealth, fame, position, success, or business—anything which absorbs unduly the affections and attention. Against all such the Almighty pronounces the decree: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and hurls his resistless missiles of destruction. Either ourselves or our idols must be destroyed.

Idolatry! You cannot find any more gross, any more cruel, on the broad earth, than within the area of a mile around this pulpit. Dark minds, from which God is obscured; deluded souls, whose fetish is the dice-box or the bottle; apathetic spirits, steeped in sensual abomination, unmoved by a moral ripple, soaking in the swamp of animal vitality; false gods, more hideous, more awful than Moloch or Baal, worshipped with shrieks, worshipped with curses, with the hearthstone for the bloody altar, and the drunken husband for the immolating priest, and women and children for the victims.—*Dr. Chapin.*

Loss of time. We are doomed to suffer a bitter pang as often as the irrevocable flight of our time is brought home with keenness to our hearts. The spectacle of the lady floating over the sea in a boat, and waking suddenly from sleep to find her magnificent ropes of pearl necklace by some accident detached from its fastening at one end, the loose string hanging down into the water, and pearl after pearl slipping off for ever into the abyss, brings before us the sadness of the case. That particular pearl which at the very moment is rolling off into the unsearchable deep, carries its own separate reproach to the lady's heart, but is more deeply reproachful as the representative of so many other uncounted pearls that have already been swallowed up irrecoverably while yet she was sleeping, of many, besides, that must follow before any remedy can be applied to what we may call this jewelly hemorrhage.

The intrepid judge. One of the favourites of

Henry V., when Prince of Wales, having been indicted for some misdemeanour, was condemned, notwithstanding all the interest he could make in his favour, and the prince was so incensed at the issue of the trial that he struck the judge on the bench. The magistrate, whose name was Sir William Gascoigne, acted with a spirit becoming his character. He instantly ordered the prince to be committed to prison, and young Henry, sensible by this time of the insult he had offered to the laws of his country, suffered himself to be quietly conducted to jail by the officers of justice. The king, Henry IV., who was an excellent judge of mankind, was no sooner informed of this transaction, than he cried out in a transport of joy, "Happy is the king who has a magistrate possessed of courage to execute the laws, and still more happy in having a son who will submit to such chastisement."—*Arvine.*

Flattery. The coin most current among mankind is flattery: the only benefit of which is, that, by hearing what we are not, we may learn what we ought to be.

Whitfield, when flattered, said, "Take care of fire: I carry powder about me."

A flattering priest told Constantine the Great that his virtues deserved the empire of the world here, and to reign with the Son of God hereafter. The emperor cried, "Fie, fie, for shame; let me hear no more such unseemly speeches; but, rather, suppliantly pray to my Almighty Maker, that, in this life and the life to come, I may be reckoned worthy to be his servant."

Excuses. He that does amiss never lacks excuse. Any excuse will serve when one has not a mind to do a thing. The archer that shoots ill has a lie ready. He that excuses himself accuses himself. A bad workman always complains of his tools.

Wicked counsel. A young man devoted himself to a religious life. His ungodly parents sent him many letters to dissuade him. Being fully decided to go on in his chosen course, when any letters came addressed to him he threw them into the fire at once, without opening them. When friends and kindred stand between us and Christ, they must be disregarded.

Sin. Sin is like the little serpent *aspis*, which stings men, whereby they fall into a pleasant sleep, and in that sleep die.—*Swinnock.*

Envy. We shall find it in Cain, the protomurderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of envy. We shall find in the dark, and gloomy, and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the king of Israel, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yea; it was envy that perpetrated that most atrocious crime ever planned in hell or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which nature gave signs of abhorrence by the rending of the rocks—I mean the crucifixion of Christ, for the evangelist tells us that for envy the Jews delivered our Lord.—*J. A. James.*

The poets imagined that envy dwelt in a dark cave; being pale and lean-looking as guilt, abounding with gall, her teeth black, never rejoicing but in the misfortunes of others: ever unquiet and careful, and continually tormenting herself.—*Wit.*

Friendship. True friendship can only be made between true men. Hearts are the soul of honour. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other; but their friendship is a rope of sand, which shall be broken at any convenient season. But if a man have a sincere heart within him, and be true and noble, then we may confide in him.—*Spurgeon.*

Ingratitude. A petted soldier of the Macedonian army was shipwrecked, and cast upon the shore apparently lifeless. A hospitable Macedonian discovered him, revived him, took him to his home, and treated him in a princely manner, and, when he departed, gave him money for his journey. The rescued soldier expressed warm thanks, and promised royal bounty to his benefactor. Instead, when he came before Philip, he related his own misfortunes, and asked to be rewarded by the lands and house of his rescuer. His request was granted, and he returned, and drove out his former host. The latter hastened to lay the true state before the king; when he restored the land, and caused the soldier to be branded in the forehead, "The Ungrateful Guest," as the reward of his baseness.

Conscience wakeful. Though in many men conscience sleeps in regard to motion, yet it never sleeps in regard to observation and notice. It may be hard and seared, it can never be blind. Like letters written with the juice of lemon, that which is written upon it, though seemingly invisible and illegible, when brought before the fire of God's judgment, shall come forth clear and expressive.—*M'Cosh.*

Guilty conscience. It gives a terrible form and a horrible voice to everything beautiful and musical without. Let Byron describe its anguish, for who felt it more than he?—

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,
Till inly searched by thousand throes,
And maddening in her ire,
One sad and sole relief she knows—
The sting she nourished for her foes;
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang, and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain;
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like scorpion girt with fire.
So writhes the mind remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death."

Forgiveness. As the prince or ruler only has power to forgive treason in his subjects, so God only has power to forgive sin. As no man can forgive a debt only the creditor to whom the debt is due, so God only can forgive us our debts, whose debtors we are to an incalculable amount. But we know that he is always ready to forgive. "He keeps mercy for thousands, and pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin"

Forgiveness. In a school in Ireland, one boy

struck another, and when he was about to be punished, the injured boy begged for his pardon. The master asked, "Why do you wish to keep him from being flogged?" The boy replied, "I have read in the New Testament that our Lord Jesus Christ said that we should forgive our enemies; and, therefore, I forgive him, and beg he may not be punished for my sake."

At the present day the green turben which marks descent from Mahomet is often worn in the East by the very poor, and even by beggars. In our own history the glory of the once illustrious Plantagenets so completely waned, that the direct representative of Margaret Plantagenet, daughter and heiress of George, Duke of Clarence, followed the trade of a cobbler in Newport, Shropshire, in 1637. Among the lineal descendants of Edmund of Woodstock, sixth son of Edward I., and entitled to quarter the royal arms, were a village butcher and a keeper of a turnpike gate; and among the descendants of Thomas Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, fifth son of Edward III., was included the late sexton of a London church.—*Geikie.*

CHAPTER II.

Critical Notes.] **1. After these things**] How long after the divorce of Vashti is uncertain. It may have been only a few months, or it may have been a year or more after. **He remembered Vashti**] And along with the remembrance came a desire to have her restored to favour again, and probably, also, a feeling that she had been too severely dealt with. **2.**] The youths, or male domestics, without regard to age, that served before the king, sought to avert the danger that threatened. They advised that maidens, virgins, be brought to the king, and that these should be beautiful to look upon. **3. The house of the women**] The harem was always an essential part of an Oriental palace. In the Persian palaces it was very extensive, since the Persian monarchs maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as three hundred or four hundred concubines. Hege, strictly speaking, seems to have been "keeper of the virgins" only, since the concubines were under the care of Shaashgaz.—*Rawlinson.* **Things of purification**] Cleansing and anointing with precious oils. **5.**] Jair, Shimei, and Kish can hardly mean the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of Mordecai. On the contrary, if Jair were perhaps his father, Shimei and Kish may have been the names of renowned ancestors.. Shimei was probably the son of Gera, and Kish the father of Saul; for in genealogical series only a few noted names are generally given. Upon the ground of this explanation, Josephus makes Esther of royal descent, viz., the line of Saul, king of Israel; and the Targum regards Shimei as the Benjamite who cursed David. It is more in accordance with the Hebrew narrative style to refer the relative to the chief person of the sentence preceding it, viz., Mordecai, who also continues to be spoken of in ver. 7. Hence we prefer this reference, without, however, attributing to Mordecai more than one hundred and twenty years of age. For the relative clause, who had been carried away, need not be so strictly understood as to assert that Mordecai himself was carried away; but the object being to give merely his origin and lineage, and not his history, it involves only the notion that he belonged to those Jews who were carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar with Jeconiah, so that he, though born in captivity, was carried to Babylon in the persons of his forefathers.—*Keil.* **7. Hadassah, that is, Esther**] Tyrwhitt regards *Hadassah* as the court name, by which she was known among the Persians, and *Esther* as her Jewish maiden name, by which she was known to her own people. But to this it may be fairly replied that she would be more likely to be known to her own people as well as to the Persians by her royal name; and most interpreters have naturally understood from the expression, *he brought up Hadassah, which is Esther*, that *Hadassah* was her early maiden name, and that she took the name of *Esther* when she became queen. Moreover, Hadassah is of Semitic origin, and signifies *myrtle;* while Esther is the Persian word for *star*. The **fair and beautiful** maiden was known as *myrtle;* the brilliant and fascinating queen was called *star*. The name Hadassah is, indeed, substantially identical with *Atossa*, mentioned by the Greek writers as the wife of Darius Hystaspes, and daughter of Cyrus, but the identity in name is insufficient to identify the Jewish virgin with one who is so clearly represented by Herodotus as both daughter of Cyrus and widow of Cambyses.—*Whedon's Com.* **His uncle's daughter**] This uncle's name was Abihail (ver. 15). Mordecai and Esther were cousins, but Mordecai must have been the elder. **9. Seven maidens**] Probably each of the virgins had the same number of maids to attend her; but Esther's maids were chosen with special care. It seems also that both Esther and her maids were favoured with the choicest apartments in the harem. **10. Not showed her people**] This was a piece of wise policy on the part of her foster-father. He knew well that the Jews were not *too* popular, and had she beforehand declared that she belonged to the captive nation, her cause would have been next to hopeless. **11. Mordecai . . . . before the court of the women's house**] This leads us to suppose that he was an eunuch. It is not probable that he would, otherwise, have such access to the house of the women as it appears he had. It is the opinion of many that he was a royal porter having

charge of one of the principal gates. **13. Whatsoever she desired**] In the way of jewels, ornaments, or dress. "No doubt," says Rawlinson, "the virgins generally took the opportunity—one that would occur but once in their lives—to load themselves with precious ornaments of various kinds—necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and the like." **15. She required nothing**] She made no effort to adorn her person with jewellery or dress to please her own fancy, but left the matter entirely to Hegai, who would be likely to know best what would please the king. **16. Tebeth** (answering to part of our December and January), **in the seventh year of his reign**] Vashti was cast off in the third year of his reign (ver. 3); so that four years passed before another queen, or at least before Esther, was crowned in her stead. **18. Made a release to the provinces**] Usually understood as a release from tribute. The Persian kings were wont to remit the arrears of tribute due at the time of their accession; and Xerxes may have thought it wise to make such a release just after the disastrous Grecian wars. The feast, release, and gifts were, doubtless, in keeping with kingliness. **19. When the virgins**, &c.] Rather, "When virgins." These words should begin a new paragraph. They stand in contrast with those of verse 8, and serve in the mind of the writer to date the new event here narrated, viz., the discovery, by Mordecai, of the plot against the life of the king.—*Speaker's Com.* It appears that there was a *second* collection of virgins at Shushan, probably made some years after the first. After his unsuccessful wars Xerxes wholly abandoned himself to the pleasures of the court. We may thus understand his second gathering of virgins. **20. Esther had not yet showed**, &c.] This verse should be regarded as a parenthesis, and is designed as a circumstantial clause, to show that Esther was obedient to Mordecai as much after she became queen as before. It also shows that this second collection sprang from no prejudice against Esther as a Jewess. **21. Bigthan**] Probably the same as *Bigtha* (ch. i. 10). Called *Bigthana* in ch. vi. 2. **Which kept the door**] Lit., *guards of the threshold.* Being doorkeepers, like Mordecai, the latter was able the more readily to learn of their conspiracy. Such conspiracies among the officers of the court were common in the East, and many a monarch (and subsequently even Xerxes himself) fell by the hand of assassins. **23. Hanged on a tree**] This punishment was performed by the Persians by crucifying or impaling. Grecian writings and the Behistun inscription frequently mention this kind of execution. The criminal was sometimes first slain, but generally impaled alive. **The book of the chronicles**] Official records, made and kept by the royal scribes, and constituting a body of state papers or annals. See note on Ezra iv. 15; 2 Sam. viii. 17; and Introduction to Kings, on the *sources.—Whedon's Com.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 1.

REGRETS—NATURAL, USELESS, AND WHOLESOME.

Vashti was banished, but she was still a queen, for she reigned in the halls of the monarch's sad memory. The jewelled turban may be placed on the head of another, but a royal soul cannot be stripped of queenly prerogatives by a monarch's power. The king bowed to her greatness, and practically confessed her royalty, though kingly pride and Persian law might prevent a revocation of the edict. He remembered Vashti in fond but sad regrets.

I. Regrets are natural. The sweet vision of Vashti's grace and beauty pleased the fancy of Ahasuerus while it troubled his soul. Her refusal to violate her modesty unconsciously called forth his admiration. And if he had any nobility in his nature, her marvellous daring must have commanded his esteem. How sad the reflection that in an evil and thoughtless moment of undue merriment and boasting he had been the cause of her fall and her banishment! Thus there would be a mixture of gloom and of light, of joy and of sorrow, of fond regrets and of painful upbraidings, as he remembered Vashti. It is natural for us to look back to the past, and indulge in grief over our losses and our follies. Man is a creature looking both before and behind. One sign of his greatness. He recalls the past, and he tries to picture the future. It was, then, natural for Ahasuerus, when his wrath was appeased, to remember Vashti, and what was decreed against her. Natural for all to regret their losses, and especially those that have been the result of their own folly.

II. Regrets and nothing more are useless. Tears will flow, but tears cannot save. They may excite pity, but cannot work out deliverance, nor undo the past. Regrets cannot suck up the water that has been spilt upon the ground. In this instance regrets cannot restore the deposed Vashti. If she knew of the monarch's

remembrance it might afford her some gratification, but this was all the good it would do her. Regrets cannot bring to life the dead which the past has entombed. Let us then so strive to live, to control our passions, that the remembrance of the past may not haunt us with reproaching misdeeds.

III. Regrets and something more may be wholesome. Regrets that issue in repentance are wholesome. It is well to remember the past when by it we are brought to true repentance. It would have been pleasant if we had been permitted to read that Ahasuerus repented as he remembered his folly. Regrets that lead to honest effort are wholesome. Wise is the man who, as he regrets the past, seeks to put forth every effort to repair the wrongs of the past, and be himself a better man for the future. Surely Ahasuerus might have done something more to repair the wrong done to Vashti in spite of the rigour of Persian law. Regrets that prompt the desire for forgiveness are wholesome. If it were not seemly for Ahasuerus to seek forgiveness from Vashti, yet he ought to have sought forgiveness from God. Have we no wrongs that need to be righted? Have we no sins that require forgiveness? We regret our sins when they expose us to temporal evils. Let us regret our sins as committed against God. Let us pray God for Christ's sake to be merciful unto us. He is ready to forgive. Let us learn that self-pleasing is the highway to self-loathing. Our greatest sorrows are often the harvest of the seed our own hands have scattered. Remorse is a bitter cup to drink, and we prepare the repellent ingredients. Memory can be a great tormentor, and the sinner makes the lash with which memory inflicts its painful strokes. And those who injure the just will find that they injure themselves much more. The just may perish, but their memory is ever blessed. The fragrance of correct thinking, of truthful speaking, and of right doing comes from the tombs of the martyrs, and blesses the world. Oh, whatever may come of worldly honours, let men and women be true to principle, and so live that truth-loving men will pleasantly remember their names, and, in a not distant future, even persecutors will assist in decorating their tombs!

Suggestive Comments on Verse 1.

All that he could do was to indulge in vain regrets; mingled, perhaps, with self-upbraidings. It is the usual penalty of rashness, especially the rashness of temporarily inflamed passion. To bring down the things of court and fashion to every-day life, how many of our police reports, attended with fines and imprisonments, are to be attributed to the very same causes as led to the deposition of Vashti, and the subsequent regrets of the king. When passion is allowed to get the reins of reason, violence is almost sure to follow, and after-reflection to administer the lash of self-censure and remorse. The seat of those domestic feuds and dastard assaults on the weak and defenceless which are brought to light in our criminal courts, and excite our indignation and horror, is just the anger, malice, and reckless speech with which we may be ourselves chargeable. It is not that we should censure them the less who have been carried into these outward acts of personal injury and brutality, but that we should be incited the more to guard our own hearts. For whether the injustice and cruel wrong be done by kings surrounded by their councillors, and defended by their rank from civil penalties, or by the meanest subjects who are lodged in our jails, the Judge of all the earth deals equitably, and in his final allotments will show that he is no respecter of persons. He brings our feelings and motives and secret passions to the same tribunal as actions, and pronounces sentence accordingly. With the fear of God upon us, let us be jealous of unbridled passion, and stamp out wrath, and we shall be saved from many of those remembrances and regrets which rob life of much happiness. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

O memory! thou art a bitter avenger. Vashti might weep, but Artaxerxes had to repent. In the heat of passion, the one small offence, which had not been of her own making, had bulked so largely in his eyes as to shut out her many excellencies, kindnesses, and devotion, but when passion had subsided, these came prominently into view, and made that one offence seem as a very mote on a ground which was generally good and praiseworthy. But he could now do nothing to remedy the evil which had been done. In this view there is something terrible in the two words which Abraham is represented as addressing to the rich man in the New Testament historical parable, "Son, remember!" Recall the past! Think on the former unrequited, unacknowledged, and abused goodness of God! Think of how thou didst despise the poor, ulcerated, dog-licked beggar at thy gate! Ah! these bitter memories of earth will be ingredients in the future cup of the penal suffering of the lost! May God in his mercy deliver us from them all, and give us in their stead the blessed memory of an accepted Saviour, and "a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us!"—*McEwen.*

I. Sin and punishment are inseparable companions. They go together with chains of adamant. Like individual twins, they are born together, live together, are attended the one by the other, as the body by the shadow.

II. When sin is in the saddle then punishment is on the crupper. Isidore, the monk, was one that vaunted he had felt in himself no motive to sin for forty years together. The Hebrews have but one and the same word for both; and blind nature prompted those mariners to demand of the obnoxious prophet Jonah, What evil hast thou done (Jonah i. 7), that the hand of thy God doth follow thee so close? and those barbarians to censure St. Paul for some murder, whom, though he had escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffered not to live (Acts xxviii. 4).—*Trapp.*

1. He thought upon the happy days he had spent in her society.

2. He remembered the proofs of affection she had formerly given.

3. He remembered her punishment. How sad and heavy! Now that his wrath is appeased, and his judgment again balanced, he can see his weakness. The wrong which he thinks he has experienced from her he now sees to be of a very doubtful kind. "He must even confess to himself that, though he had consulted his counsellors, he still had acted in a passionate manner, and given too free a rein to his wrath." This should have taught him to control his passions.

4. He remembered Vashti, but she was now lost to him. Lost for ever as his queen. Lost by his own act. The result of his own passion and wrath. And now the folly of his own act, like a serpent, stings him. Ahasuerus, amid all his wealth and splendour, now feels an oppressive want. He suffered a loss which could not be made good by any other possession, however precious. He may have more wives, and many of them, but they are not Vashti. David may have another son, but not a fair Absalom.

In speaking of the king's sorrow, it should be distinguished from repentance, or godly sorrow. From what we know of the character of Ahasuerus, we may safely conclude that the remorse he felt would be of a selfish character. He was no doubt troubled, but was it—

1. Because of the injustice he had done to a virtuous, yet helpless woman? or 2. Because he felt that he had sinned against the law of right? or 3. Because he had lost his beautiful queen? Doubtless the latter chiefly, if not entirely. It was, therefore, only selfish sorrow. The kind of repentance or sorrow which a thief has when he finds himself in prison, deprived of liberty. He grieves, not because he is a thief, and wrongs his fellows, but because he has lost the chance to steal. Had Ahasuerus not lost Vashti, he would probably have never felt a pang. This feeling is as different as possible from repentance. Real repentance begins in humiliation of heart, and ends in reformation of life; it consists in the heart being broken *for* sin, and *by* sin. If we ever enjoy that peace which comes from God, our repentance must be that which is not to be repented of.

The nature of true repentance is well

set forth in the following outline, by a wise old writer:—

There seems to be an hysterosis in the words, "Repent thee of thy remissness, laziness, lukewarmness, and learn by that thou sufferest to be zealous of good works," "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Be zealous and repent; that is, be in earnest and thorough in thy repentance, and each part thereof, contrition, or humiliation, and conversion, or reformation.

1. Know that God will never leave pursuing thee until the traitor's head be thrown over the wall, till thou humble thyself, and walk with God. As one cloud follows another, until the sun consumes them, so one judgment after another, till godly sorrow dispels them. Let the glory be to him, taking the shame and blame of it ourselves, submitting to anything that he shall see good to inflict. Say, Here I am, let him do to me as seemeth him best. If God will have my life, here it is; if my goods, here they are; if my children or any other dear pledge of his former favour, I resign them freely into his hands. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; not your hands only, with Pilate, but your hearts also, with David (Ps. li.). Make use of all means, improve all occasions, turn all the streams into this one channel, for the driving of that mill may grind the heart.

2. Our sorrow must be unto a transmutation, or inward change. Our contrition must be joined with conversion, else all is lost; for this latter is the consummation of the former, and the seal of its sincerity. Here, then, you must set to work again, and be zealous in it. Let your crosses teach you to cast away all your transgressions, to turn from all your wickedness, repent of all your dead works, and put off all the fruits of the flesh. Spare no sin, but least of all thy beloved sin—thy familiar devil; pitch thy hatred chiefly upon that, fight neither against small nor great in comparison of that; say of it, as Haman of Mordecai, What avails me anything so long as that liveth? But that once dead, the rest will soon follow, as all the servants attend the master's funeral.—*Trapp.*

When the wrath of Ahasuerus was cooled, did he not, think you, envy persons of a less powerful position than himself?

Remorse now punished the king almost as severely as his imperious and unjust decree had punished the unhappy queen.

Man is not so wise that his decrees are perfect, and his enactments incapable of improvement.

He ought to have felt grief and shame, that, in his wine and rage, he had so severely punished, and in such an irrevocable manner rejected, so fair and desirable a woman.

Time assuageth the heat of anger, but time does not always fill up the gaps which human wrath makes.

Man has wants which no wealth can meet. There is *a* want which the best social arrangements cannot supply.

There is a craving in the human heart which no earthly power can satisfy.

Guilty man needs to be placed in a right relation towards God.

"Ahasuerus was as poor as the humblest slave in his dominions in this respect, and far poorer than the poorest of the children of Judah, dispersed through his empire as exiles, but knowing Jehovah." When the soul can rest on God, as the God of redemption, when it can claim Jesus Christ as its portion, then all outward inequalities of rank and fortune become subordinate; the Christian possessor of a large inheritance feels that his chief good is in Christ, the poor believer feels that he has a share of the same exhaustless fulness. There is nothing that a man is more ready to keep than his wrath. But Ahasuerus's against Vashti was after a time assuaged. He remembered Vashti not without some remorse, but without all true repentance. He forsook not his rash anger as a sin, but regretted it for a time, and laid it asleep, to be raked up again on as slight an occasion. In graceless persons vices may be barbed or benumbed, not mastered and mortified. A merchant may part with his goods, and yet not hate them. A man may part with his sins for self-respects, and yet retain his affection for them; he may remember his Vashti, his bosom sins, from which he seemeth divorced, and, by such a sinful remembering of them, recommit them.—*Trapp.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1—4.

THE SERVILITY OF THE KING'S SERVANTS

It is to be expected that servants should obey, and should seek to study the desires and wishes of those whom they serve. But even servants should exercise discretion, and not sacrifice principle at the shrine of policy. It does not appear that these servants set themselves to consider the claims of principle. Policy was their rule. By policy were they governed, and by policy were they at last undone.

I. These servants studied the king's weakness. But this did not require much study. It was patent to the dullest observer. Those who are constantly about a man may understand the man better than he understands himself. These servants evidently understood the monarch's weakness. Ultimately safe is it for the man to be surrounded by those who can be, and will be, faithful. We may not like faithful men, but at the last we shall find them to serve our highest welfare.

II. These servants pandered to the king's weakness. Base pandering to the sinful weaknesses of men and women has been the bane of every age. It is at work in this enlightened age. While we rightly consider the corruption of a Persian court let us seek to have our eyes open to the corruptions of English society; and faithfully endeavour to stem the torrent of iniquity. Are we still to pursue the system of pandering to the worst passions of our fellows? Are there no faithful ones to be found in modern society?

III. These servants unscrupulously provided for the king's weakness. The barbarous nature of their proposition could not be so evident to them as it is to us who live in these more blessed days. But surely even to them a passing thought might come as to the cruel nature of their proposition. Did they never and for one moment think of the cruelty of the proceeding by which the fairest flowers were to be plucked with ruthless hand from the choicest home-gardens of the land? Did they not consider the woes and tears of mothers and fathers weeping for the loss of the fair young virgins taken to be imprisoned in the king's harem? But self-interest blinds our eyes to the interests of others, and to the claims of truth and of duty. It would be so then, as it is now on too large a scale. Men are still unscrupulous. We bow at the shrines of fashion, of custom, and of wealth. Oh, in these days Mammon is the great monarch, at whose behests fair young virgins are deflowered and strong young men are slaughtered. Mammon is exalted. Humanity is trampled beneath the feet. Mammon is the modern Ahasuerus, at whose commands homes must be decimated and true nobility thrown to the winds.

IV. These servants were for the present successful. Their proposition pleased the king, and measures were carried out for its accomplishment. Yet the success was not according to their wish. True, Vashti was banished and the measures were carried out to prevent her recall; yet those measures tended to the promotion of Esther, who was God's instrument for the salvation of her people, and the destruction of the Lord's enemies. The benefits, then, of a time-serving policy are not of the most lasting nature. If we would reap permanent good we must sow Divine seed. If we would build permanent structures of glory we must use Divine materials.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS ON VERSES 2—4.

It is said the king's servants suggested this to him. But kings' servants know pretty well what to suggest. No doubt, however, the policy of having another queen-royal had the approbation of the wise men, else it could not have been carried out successfully.

And then began the preparation, the

narrative of which needs no illustration of ours. It is perfectly plain: and it is not edifying. And yet *it is*. Rightly read — under due emotions and reflections, it *is* edifying (and especially to the female part of the world), in the highest degree. That *ought* to be edifying which shows much cause for gratitude. Now just look at that picture of Persian female life of the highest kind. Persia—the mistress of civilization at the time: the seat of wealth and splendour: the land of the brave and the wise. And this is how it treats its noblest women! Could female degradation be more complete? All the more complete that none wondered: none protested: none resisted — unless we may take Vashti's rebellion as a kind of moral insurrection against the whole treatment and state of woman. If it was so, it spent itself. For here they come from far and near—the young, the fair, the nobly-born — as well as those of humbler condition in their miserable darkness, thinking that an honour (without a thought of wrong about it), which would now be esteemed, in any Christian country, the deepest disgrace. To use the words of an English bishop on this chapter, "It is," he says, "of priceless worth, as showing the need under which the human race then lay, of that deliverance which has been wrought by the incarnation of the Son of God, the seed of the woman, who raised womanhood to a high and holy dignity, and by that spiritual espousal of a Church universal, by which he had sanctified marriage, and made it a great mystery. And it may remind the world of the inestimable benefits it owes to Christianity." Also, one ought to say, that the narrative of this chapter, although we pass it over lightly, is quite purely written. Now this matter ought to be faced, plainly. Sceptics and enemies of the faith are in the habit of alleging or insinuating that there are not a few passages in Holy Writ not fit to be read in families and congregations —hardly in closets. A considerable number of passages certainly are not *suitable* for public reading or exposition. Therefore they are not read; and they are not expounded, except for some special ends. But impure passages, indelicate corrupting passages? Not one. The breath of God has passed through this chapter, and it is clear and clean, so that no one of simple mind will get harm by reading it. Would any one say the same regarding some of our fashionable novels and tales?—many of them, softly be it spoken, and sorrowfully, and with shame, written by women!!—by women calling themselves Christians, who, at any rate, have received the benefit of the Christian civilization so far, who therefore have been elevated—away beyond heathen female life. And this is the way they behave themselves, and show their gratitude. They spend their energy and their genius, such as it is, in corrupting their fellow-creatures, filling the minds of the young with evil suggestions, which either distress them, or pollute and deprave them: working up disgusting situations, and horrible scenes; making light of the holiest ties of human life, and apologizing for some of its deepest evils and crimes.

I am not speaking at random, although I do not profess to be speaking from any extensive personal knowledge; but on reliable authority, by consensus of judgment of the most impartial description, I believe this matter needs the attention of good people far more urgently than some other things which secure that attention. At any rate, I feel quite sure that I am but doing my duty in thus testifying and warning. One thing we can all do, we can refuse to read. Happily there is enough *good* literature of every kind —not heavy, dull, solemn, but fresh, bright, humorous, pathetic, comic, tragic—all kinds of the really good, by writers both alive and dead. So that there is no excuse for going down into the slough. "Keep thyself pure."—*Raleigh.*

Verses 3, 4.—This was an extravagant course. 1. *All the provinces of the kingdom must be searched for fair young virgins.* 2. *Officers were appointed to choose them.* 3. *A house was prepared for them,* and a person appointed to have charge of them, to see that they were well provided for. 4.

No less than twelve months was allowed them for their purification, some of them at least, who were brought out of the country, that they might be very clean and purified. Even those who were the masterpieces of nature must yet have all this help from art to recommend them to a vain and carnal mind. 5. After the king had once taken them to his bed, they were made recluses ever after, except the king pleased at any time to send for them; they were looked upon as secondary wives, were maintained by the king accordingly, and might not marry.—*Matthew Henry.*

A true representation of what we should be without the Gospel.

Without Divine revelation man sinks very low.

Learn how much we are indebted to the Bible for *present* as well as for future happiness.

We enjoy the inestimable advantage of knowing the Lord's will. We are unworthy of it if we follow the promptings and suggestions of our own hearts in order to *please* ourselves.

The first question with us should be, How are we to walk so as to please God?

Nothing is a surer sign of our depravity than to prefer the pleasing of our flesh to the pleasing of him who made us, of him by whom we must be judged at the last day.

If we make it our grand business to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, we walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.—*Dr. Lawson.*

It is not possible that great princes should want soothing up in all their inclinations—in all their actions. Nothing could sound more pleasing to a carnal ear, than that all the fair young virgins, throughout all his dominions, should be gathered into his palace at Shushan for his assay and choice. The decree is soon published; the charge is committed to Hegai, the king's chamberlain, both of their purification and ornaments.—*Bishop Hall.*

The marriages of princes are commonly made by policy and interest, for the enlarging of their dominions and the strengthening of their alliances; but this must be made partly by the agreeableness of the person to the king's fancy, whether she be rich or poor, noble or ignoble.

What ado was made here to humour the king; as if his power and wealth were given him for no other end but that he might have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasureableness and exquisitely refined, though at the best they are but dross and dregs in comparison with Divine and spiritual pleasure.

The higher men are advanced in authority, the lower they sink in slavery to their sensual appetites. How low is humanity sunk when such as these are the leading pursuits and highest happiness of men! when every consideration of decency, equity, and conscience, even health, life, and the immortal soul itself, are sacrificed; disappointment and vexation must ensue; and he most wisely consults his enjoyment, even in this present life, who most exactly obeys the precept of the Divine law.—*Scott.*

Verse 2. They knew him to be a sensualist and effeminate; they therefore agree to feed his humour, to drown him again in pleasure, so to drive away his melancholy. Such miserable comforters are carnal physicians; so wretched is our nature, to endure no other physic; so justly doth God fit the physician to the patient, the helve to the hatchet; so do the wicked help each other forward to their deserved destruction. Ahasuerus' counsellors became brokers to his lust, neither is this anything unusual with such.—*Trapp.*

The whole passage affords us displays of human character, the contemplation of which is highly useful; but the chief thing which it is intended to exhibit to us is the wonderful working of God for the accomplishment of his purposes, especially in relation to his Church and his people. The divorce of Vashti was intended to prepare the way for the exaltation of Esther, and she was raised to the kingdom that, by her influence with the king, she might prevent a plot for the extermination of the Jewish race. And how wonderfully was this brought about. None of the agents dreamed of such a thing. It was brought about by means of heathens.—*Dr. M'Cria.*

In this second chapter we are permitted to see the consequences which resulted from the banquet described in the first chapter. In the present lecture we shall state and enforce one or two general principles. "After these things," etc. (vers. 1—4).

I. **We have here to notice the regret of the king for his rash and unwarrantable act.** It is very obvious from the narrative, that when he came to himself, and had time to reflect on all that had taken place, he was sensible that he had committed injury; and that he had not only wronged Vashti, but also made himself a sufferer. (1) *He could not devise a remedy.* There are wishes which even the most powerful despots cannot get gratified, and limits to their will which even they cannot pass over. It seemed to be by a simple exercise of supreme authority that Ahasuerus triumphed over the helpless, and had his desire carried into effect. But when he would have retraced his steps, he could not. (2) *The law of the Medes and Persians must stand.* Yet the enactment which did wrong to the innocent queen, at the same time recoiled upon the head of the king himself.

II. **But again we have to notice the expedient which his counsellors suggested to free him from his difficulty.** Probably he would be moody and harsh toward them, when he saw to what issue their advice had brought him. Despotism, like spoilt children, must be soothed and flattered. He had degraded his queen; but another might be found to occupy the place from which she had been removed. The humour of the king fell in with the suggestion. He consented; it led to the promotion of Esther, a Jewess, to the high dignity of being Queen of Persia. These things are worthy of our attention in the way of practical application. They suggest several lessons. 1. In the first place we may draw from them the lesson, that when men suffer themselves to be carried away by the impulse of any violent passions, they may commit acts which cannot afterwards be remedied, and which they themselves may have especially to lament. We think it is plain from the words, "the king remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her," that when he was able to reflect calmly upon the decree which had been issued for the degradation of Vashti, he was conscious that she had been faithful to her place and character, while he himself had forgotten what was due to both. All the past he would gladly have cancelled, but it was beyond his power. His will could work evil, but it could not undo the evil which had been wrought. 2. It forms no excuse for sin committed, that the transgressor had reduced himself to a condition in which he ceased to retain his full consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong. It is with his own consent that he passes the boundary line between reason and folly; and although, in one aspect of the case, he may not be precisely answerable for all his acts when the power of self-government is gone, yet obviously he is to be called to account for reducing himself to that state. Let us take an illustration from the history of Saul. Furnished with the gifts of the Spirit, counselled by Samuel, he might have been a model to the sovereigns who were to come after him. He failed to improve his privileges, the Spirit of the Lord departed, and the evil spirit took possession of him—slew prophets, etc. *He* was held responsible, although the evil spirit prompted him, because he had laid his heart open for the reception of the evil spirit. Just so in all cases. When a man has perpetrated a criminal act, having *wilfully* deprived himself of the power that would have restrained him from it, he has no right to claim immunity from the consequences of his miserable self-will, or to complain that he is unrighteously dealt with when he is visited with punishment. 3. But there is another general application which may be legitimately made of this part of our subject, viz., that repentance may come too late. There is many a cry for mercy raised when the time for the exercise of mercy has passed away. By the law of the Medes and Persians the king found himself in a condition from which he would gladly have been extricated, but could not devise the means. By the unalterable law of heaven

it is ordained that except we repent we must perish. And by the same law it is required that repentance be immediate. "Wherefore, my brethren, take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." But notice—

III. The whole case furnishes such evidence of the power of an overruling Providence, that I would take this opportunity of referring to the subject. The lesson which the text teaches is, in one sentence, this—*that, amid all the workings of human passion and folly, there is a power exercised which brings order out of confusion, and good out of evil.* 1. We present the case briefly as the text brings it before us. Revelry had produced disorder. It had led to most unjust measures towards the queen. The advisers of these measures, finding it necessary to soothe the feelings of their despotic sovereign, recommended to him a certain mode of procedure. The result of this was Esther's advancement. In all this we have a special Providence, overruling the sins of men for the promotion of the interests of the people of God. 2. We see a specimen of the absolute and unrestrained will of man put forth to accomplish ends which had no apparent connection whatever with the will of God, or with what would be pleasing to him. When the curtain which conceals the movements of Providence is withdrawn, we can manifestly trace the connection between the follies and passions of men and the production of important results which they could not have dreamt of. We can perceive the hand of the Lord working where we would not have looked for it, and understand how the very wrath of men is made to praise him. But observe, the sin of the monarch was not one whit diminished because it was overruled for good; but neither is the good to be regarded as evil because it was the undesigned fruit of man's unholy passions.—*Dr. Davidson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 5—7.

A TRULY ROYAL CHARACTER.

The leading part of this history is prophetic. While it records the past it depicts the future. It shows how two of the Jewish nation rose, through the providence of God, to occupy the foremost positions in the Persian kingdom. Mordecai the Jew and Esther his foster-child—two captives—became next in authority and in power to king Ahasuerus. They were great both among the Jews and among the Persians: for the one was queen, and the other was prime minister. The story of their humiliation and after-exaltation is only equalled by the charming narrative of Joseph. And both surpass in interest the inventions of skilful novelists. History and biography repeat themselves. The Hamans have persecuted and planned the destruction of the Mordecais; but the irrepressible genius of the Jewish nation has ever asserted its sovereignty. It is surprising how the Jew from time to time battles successfully against adversity, and makes it minister to prosperity. The Jews have accumulated wealth,—though every barrier has been raised against their success,—and their property has been again and again confiscated by greedy rulers. The Jews have risen to power in spite of restrictive enactments. Their influence is felt to-day to a large extent. The noblest part of our literature is based on Jewish records. They have given to the world its best system of morals. Surely this wondrous people have still a most important part to play in this world's great transactions; and the study of the most obscure among this people cannot be devoid of interest to every intelligent being.

I. **Mordecai's royal ancestry.** Great importance was attached to genealogical tables by ancient nations. They did not smile at the claims of long descent. Certainly intellectual and moral, as well as physical, qualities are capable of transmission. It is indeed true that some boast of their ancestry who have little else to boast. The Jews were especially particular in their records of genealogy for

territorial, political, and religious reasons. Thus in the Targum of Esther we have Haman's pedigree traced through twenty-one generations to the "impious Esau;" and Mordecai's through forty-two generations to Abraham. In this canonical account Mordecai's pedigree is traced to the tribe of Benjamin. This was one of the smallest tribes, but three names make it prominent. From it sprang Saul, the first king of the Jewish nation; Mordecai, the noble deliverer of his people; and Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles. On the one hand Mordecai was connected with Saul, who was royal by virtue of his office; and on the other hand he was connected with Paul, who was royal by virtue of the nobility of his character. Mordecai himself was of royal ancestry, of royal character, exercising regal functions, "seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." He was a man to do honour to any tribe. It is no wonder that he stands high in Rabbinical estimation, and that mythical stories gather around his person. He is spoken of as being acquainted with seventy languages, and as having lived four hundred years. He is invested with splendid robes, adorned with costly jewels, and placed on the pinnacle of earthly greatness. The courtly heralds with their trumpets proclaim his glory. He was nobler than all. There dwelt within him a patriotic spirit that made him sublime. There was in him a heroic assertion of manhood, which lifted him high above the common people. There was also a wonderful tenderness, which made him the adored of his own nation. He was one of those men that only appear at intervals, that dignify the race, and seem to make sacred *the soil on which they tread.*

II. Mordecai's unattractive name. Proper names are words which serve for marks separating one individual from another. The name Mordecai brings before us the individual and separates him from the person named Haman. The name Mordecai, when viewed as to its meaning, does not raise in our mind the correct thought as to his character. We may consider Mordecai as a word of Chaldæan or Persian origin, and as meaning the worshipper of Merodach, the war-god of Babylon. But he was no foolish idolater. If he had been there was no justification for his refusal to bow down before Haman. If he had been he would not have so resolutely adhered to the purpose of delivering the Jews, the worshippers of the true God. He was by moral lineage connected with Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God. The name may be but the reputation, which may be true or false. Character is what the man is. To be noble is better than to be accounted noble. Let men rise superior to names. The word Mordecai has been made to mean the little man. He may have been little physically; and thus the two Benjamites stood in striking contrast. Saul was head and shoulders above his fellows; and Mordecai was perhaps below the average standard. Saul was, however, selfish and mean-spirited; while Mordecai was benevolent and noble-spirited. Saul was craven and cowed before a woman; but Mordecai was bold and daring before the great Haman. Saul abjectly prayed to be honoured before the elders of his people, and before Israel; but Mordecai cared not for his own honour so long as Israel was saved and glorified. If the man is not the mere flesh and bones that constitute the external framework, then Saul was the little man and Mordecai the great man. Manhood is not to be gauged by inches or by ounces; but by thoughts, feelings, and actions. Brutes may be measured and weighed by material appliances; but men should be measured and weighed by moral appliances. The balances of the infinite purities are the tests by which men should be tried. And then what a reversal of estimates. The little becomes great, and the so-called great dwindle down to their true proportions. The Sauls are rejected, as Saul was at last. The Mordecais are honoured, for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. In the Targum of Esther he is said to be called Mordecai, because he was like the pure myrrh. Its taste is bitter and acid, and its smell strong. The taste of this myrrh was bitter and acid to the enemies of God and of goodness; but its smell was sweet to the delivered Jews. As the myrrh is pressed to bring out its fragrance; so the essential sweetness of Mordecai's character was brought out

more fully by the afflictions to which he was subjected. He was crushed not to death, but into a more perfect life and a Diviner fragrance. He was one of those world's great solitary heroes that conquered by his defeats. Ever thus is noble manhood developed. Rough is the school where genius is trained. Sharp is the stroke which touches the soul into Diviner aspects. Keen is the instrument which shapes the spirit into perfect forms of moral beauty. Rude and steep is the pathway along which the traveller struggles up to the heights where the celestial sunlight quivers, and where the soul finds a sphere adequate for its expansion.

III. **Mordecai's attractive deed.** Mordecai is greatest when he saw his little cousin left a poor orphan, and took her to his house and to his heart, and became to her a second father, so gentle and loving that she no longer mourned the loss of her first father. She delighted to render to Mordecai the allegiance of a true loving daughter. We too often lose sight of the fact that life's little things are really life's great things. We begin with the little and go up to the great. But we do not measure correctly. Our terms are untrue. The great deed was when Mordecai took and brought up Hadassah. The little deed was when he reaped the results of his goodness. For sowing is greater than reaping; but the sowing is done in tears, and the harvest is gathered amid a flourish of trumpets. Men are greatest in their little things. The chariot of Ahasuerus was not checked in its course, the attendant courtiers never condescended to notice, when Mordecai guided to his home the orphaned girl. But he was sowing seed which produced strange and yet glorious fruit. The deed was most attractive. He was true to the claims of relationship and to the dictates of humanity. Without thought of reward, without a knowledge of her future glory, he adopted the child. The orphan's tears touched his heart and evoked his sympathies. How sweetly pathetic the short account, "Whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter." Christianity is better than Judaism. Let it be ever seen that the Christian religion makes its adherents human, tender, considerate. Let us not say, A father to the fatherless is God in his holy habitation, and leave the fatherless to starvation and beggary. Christianity has done much in this direction. Orphan homes are the trophies of the humanizing tendencies. But adoption of the orphan is better than crowding a lot of poor orphans together to be drilled and marched out like young soldiers. Esthers grow best when the Mordecais become their fathers. Christianity *has still much work to do.*

Suggestive Comments on Verses 5—7.

It is singular that it should have ever been imagined, although it has been by some, that it was Mordecai who had been carried from Jerusalem to Babylon, at the time when Jeconiah, also called Jehoiachim, was dethroned, and led into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. In that case, he must at this time have been considerably more than a hundred years old, which is altogether inconsistent with the part he is represented as performing in this book. It is evidently Kish, his great-grandfather, who lived in Jeconiah's time, and who was carried to Babylon, on which supposition Mordecai would be a man probably in the prime of life at the period referred to in the text. His cousin Esther, or Hadassah (which was her Jewish name), had been left an orphan. Whether Mordecai had any family of his own we are not informed; but, moved with compassion for her in her desolate and unprotected state, he took her to his house, and brought her up as his own daughter. The maiden was fair and beautiful, it is said—the expressions mean that she was of graceful form and beautiful countenance—and from what is brought out in the history, the endowments of her mind were in harmony with the graces of her person. Sad, however, might the destiny of the lovely orphan have been, but for the kind and tender-hearted Mordecai. If she had been cast upon the world with-

out friends and without a home, the very beauty and accomplishments with which she was so highly gifted might have rendered her only a prey to some of those designing and selfish wretches whose chief object it is to seduce and ruin those who are fair and beautiful as she was. But the eye of the Lord was upon the helpless maiden, to protect and guide her; and Mordecai had her brought to his house as her home. No doubt he felt that he was sufficiently rewarded for his benevolence, in watching over a creature so interesting as Esther must have been—in marking her progress, and receiving the tokens of her confidence and affection. But there were other rewards in store for him, which he dreamt not of, to recompense his work of faith and labour of love. In taking her into his house, and charging himself with the expense of her education and maintenance, he may have been regarded by some of his covetous neighbours, especially if he had a family of his own, as laying himself under a burden which a prudent man would have rather endeavoured to avoid. But he thought not of this. He acted according to the spirit of the Divine law, and the impulses of his own generous heart; and that from which selfishness would have turned away as a burden, he found eventually to be in every respect a precious treasure. A blessing followed him because he had pity upon the orphan.

Now, there are some remarks very obviously suggested by this part of the narrative. I should say that here we have a fine example of the practical power of true religion, in leading to a benevolent regard for the comfort and well-being of the unprotected. It cannot be denied indeed, that specimens of the same kind of benevolence are to be found among the heathen. The ties of kindred have been felt and acknowledged where the light of Divine truth was never enjoyed; and there are on record acts of generosity and self-denial performed by men ignorant of the Bible, which put to shame the selfishness of many who live under the teaching of the Word of God. But there is this difference; that Mordecai, in what he did for Esther, acted only in accordance with the maxims and spirit of the law which came from heaven — only did what the law positively enjoined, and what, as professing to be subject to it, it became him to do. One manifest purpose of the Mosaic dispensation was, while it separated the seed of Abraham from all other nations, to unite them closely among themselves as brethren. And this purpose it effected to a wonderful extent, notwithstanding the opposition which it had to encounter from the corrupt heart and grovelling propensities of the people among whom it was set up. It is peculiarly interesting to notice, that it was during the captivity, when the Jews were scattered hither and thither throughout the Persian dominions, and when every man might have been supposed to have enough to do in attending to his own interests, and providing for his own family, that Mordecai took charge of his uncle's orphan daughter, and gave her a refuge in his own house. Whatever care and difficulty he had to undergo in supporting himself in the land of exile, he remembered the injunction of the law,—"Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child; if thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry;" and the prophet's commentary upon it,—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen, that thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

Now, while it is impossible for us to read what Mordecai did without feeling that his memory deserves to be had in respect, as a man who had imbibed the spirit of the law, and who, amid many temptations to set its injunctions aside, endeavoured to regulate his conduct by its requirements; while we see in him an exemplification of that principle of brotherly love, which the law so earnestly inculcates; let us not forget that the gospel of Christ is designed at once to deepen the feeling of brotherly affection, and to give it a far wider range of operation. If the poor exiled Jew had compassion on his orphan niece, and brought her up as his own daughter,

how sacred should the claims of orphanage be in the view of those who profess to follow him who said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love each other." The charities of the Jews were confined almost exclusively to those of their own nation. This was indeed a natural consequence of their being isolated from the rest of the world; a result of the particular light in which they were taught to regard the heathen, and in which the heathen in turn regarded them. But "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free; but all are one in him." Not that the ties of ordinary relationship are weakened by the gospel, and that we are to overlook the special claims of kindred in the enlarged field which it opens up for the exercise of our benevolent affections. By no means. But we are to act toward all men as if they were our neighbours, and toward all who are of the household of faith as brethren. This is the lesson which we learn from our Lord's teaching, and more emphatically still from his example. And it must be confessed, to the honour of Christianity, that one circumstance which distinguishes the countries which have been even only in name brought under its influence, is the provision that has been made in various forms for the distresses of suffering humanity. The institutions for the relief of the diseased, of the destitute, of the fatherless and the orphan, and of the erring who would fain return into the paths of rectitude, are to be regarded as so many evidences of what the gospel has effected for the removal of the temporal evils under which society groans. Different opinions there may well be as to the wisdom of the rules by which some of these institutions are governed, and of the means by which they seek the attainment of their objects; but there can be no dispute as to their benevolent design, or as to the point, that their origin is to be traced up to the diffusion of the knowledge of the Word of God. At the same time, my friends, I cannot help remarking, that there is something in the conduct of Mordecai, as recorded in the text, and of those who, like him, exercise their benevolence personally in assisting and protecting the helpless, and endeavouring to ameliorate their condition—something that raises it far above that of the people who contribute, however largely and willingly, toward the support of public institutions for the relief of the distressed. It is an easy matter for the wealthy to be charitable, when their gifts, administered by others, involve no sacrifice of time or labour, and no care and anxiety to themselves. But the noblest exercise of charity is exhibited when we take an interest personally in the well-being of the unprotected, and when they can look to us as their friends and counsellors, to whom they can have recourse in their sorrows, and troubles, and difficulties. It may not be that we have opportunity to act literally as Mordecai did, and to give shelter to the orphan in our own homes; but we only act in the spirit of the gospel of Christ, when, according to our means, we make some of the helpless the objects of our special care, and regard them as a trust committed to us by our heavenly Father. The exercise of the kindly affections toward any such carries in it its own reward, and with these labours of love on the part of his people God is well pleased.—*Davidson.*

Mordecai is a lowly descendant of a formerly distinguished, indeed royal, family. He belongs to the scattered foreigners fallen under contempt, who were carried away captives from Jerusalem. He is in a strange land. He has, it appears, neither father nor mother, neither wife nor child. Even his relatives, his uncle and his aunt, are dead. But the latter left an orphan; he is to her a father, she to him a daughter, indeed a precious treasure. Doubtless he is aware how great a trust was left to him in her and with her; how God is justly called the Father of orphans, and that He especially blesses those who pity and minister to them. He knows his duty toward her, and its fulfilment brings to him satisfaction, makes him

happy. God has blessed her with beauty; but what is more, he has bestowed on her an obedient, humble, and unassuring spirit, as is afterwards fully shown by her conduct in the royal house of the women, and as had doubtless been often manifested before. She loves her people, and surely also its customs, laws, and religion. Thus she is to him indeed a Hadassah, a *myrtle*, in the true sense of the word, an unpromising and yet promising bud. Indeed, to him she was developed into a lovely flower of hope; and though it happen that she is taken into the royal house of the women, she will still be to him a lovely flower, whose presence he seeks, whose prosperity lies at his heart day by day, whose development will cause him to rejoice. Again, she will more and more become to him a brilliant star, an Esther, in whose light he views his own and his people's future. In this manner his life is not poor, though he appear insignificant and obscure, though it be filled with painful reminiscences and great perplexities, which he must combat daily in his heathen surroundings. On the contrary, he is rich in light and hope; and even if he had realized the latter in a less degree than he eventually did, still his existence would not have been in vain.—*Lange.*

Ver. 5. Mordecai was one of those characters which clearly reveal the hand of Providence.

The light we have of his early life is little better than darkness. But when he appears at Shushan it becomes lustrous as the noontide sun.

He possessed the qualification which fitted him for swaying a sceptre.

Mordecai's ancestors were dead and buried, but family greatness lived with him.

Some men's noble deeds and heroism exist only in name, are hung in picture-galleries, and recorded in the chronicles of their family.

A great name is often carried by a very *little* man. Greatness does not always pass on.

In the person of Richard Cromwell we have not an Oliver Cromwell.

Ver. 6. *Carried away.* Every child of God is where God has placed him for some purpose. You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve him where you are. If you are sitting at the king's gate there is something for you to do there, and if you were on the queen's throne, there would be something for you to do there: do not ask either to be gatekeeper or queen, but whichever you are serve God therein. Mordecai did well because he acted as Mordecai should.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

The best may have their share in a common calamity; but God will not fail even then to set his eyes upon them for good. The husbandman cutteth his corn and weed together, but for different purpose. One and the same common calamity proveth, melteth, purifieth the good, damneth, wasteth, destroyeth the evil.—*Trapp.*

It was a good thing for Esther when left an orphan, in a strange land, that Mordecai would become her foster-father.

It was a good thing for Mordecai that he took Esther home and brought her up.

Whilst *giving* he received. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." This Mordecai experienced.

Be careful whom you turn from your door; an angel, in rags, may come there some day.

The adopted child, or even the captive slave, may be God's ministering angel.

That passage, "*The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake,*" is very suggestive.

The little maid in Naaman's house became an untold blessing to her master.

Mordecai took Esther, and was well rewarded. 1. By Esther's goodness when with him. 2. By her obedience to him after she had left him.

Mordecai brought up Hadassah, and Esther afterwards *brought up* Mordecai.

She was a poor orphan, but Christ left her not comfortless. He had provided and enabled Mordecai to feed her, to train her up in the fear of God, and to defend her chastity from the fear of lust; beside that, her head was by Him destined to a diadem. Esther the captive shall be Esther the queen; Esther the motherless and fatherless shall be a nursing mother to the Church, and,

meanwhile, meet with a merciful guardian — Mordecai. Why, then, should not we trust God with ourselves and our children?—*Trapp.*

Took for his own daughter. He hid not his eyes from his own flesh, as some unnatural ostrich or sea-monster; he made not, as many do, tuition a broker for private gain; he made not, instead of a daughter, a slave or sponge of his pupil; he devoured her not under pretence of devotion, but freely took her for his child, and bred her in the best manner.—*Trapp.*

There is a resemblance between Esther and Moses.

1. The one was raised up to emancipate Israel from cruel bondage, the other to preserve them from a plot which had for its object their extermination.

2. Moses was taken out of the river, and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Esther was raised to the bed of Ahasuerus and the crown royal.

3. After mentioning the barbarous edict for destroying all their children, Stephen says: "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair"—"fair to God," as it is in the original, according to the Hebrew idiom. It was the beauty of the babe, shining through its tears, that excited the compassion of the Egyptian princess; and it was Esther's beauty which first won the Persian monarch.

4. But the Apostle, referring to the faith of Moses, lets us further into the mystery of Providence: "By faith Moses was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child." Mordecai was to Esther father and mother; and what hinders us to think that he participated in the feelings of the parents of Moses, and that when he first looked on the beauty of the infant orphan, faith combined with natural affection and benevolence in inducing him to take her for his own daughter.—*Dr. M'Cris.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 8—10.

Esther's Hopeful Beginning.

A good beginning often ensures a good ending. Often, but not always. Buds of promise in this world are sadly and frequently nipped by the untimely blast, or the searching frost. Purposes are broken. Glorious plans are thwarted. Well-conceived structures do not reach completion. However, Esther began well and ended well. She was one of those wondrous beings that make an impression upon all. She carried sunshine everywhere, and all were attracted by the sweet light of her presence.

I. Esther was brought to the king's house along with other maidens. This was not much to the other maidens. To some a gloomy prospect. But to Esther it was one of the steps to a future high position.

II. She impressed the keeper of the women. The maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him. On her entrance into what we may call public life she made an impression. She moved along, exerting a charm upon all. Monarch and subject confessed her power, and yielded to her benign sway. All are not alike gifted with this power of pleasing, but all should strive to please others for their good to edification. The more unselfish we become, the more are we likely to please others and to receive kindness.

III. She was advanced to the best place. Hegai preferred her to the best place of the house of the women. Ahasuerus advanced her to the best place in the kingdom. She receives a good place in the pages of sacred history. Let not our strife be for the best of earthly places. That is the best place where the good Lord shows his glory. Let us dwell in the presence of Jesus Christ. Where he dwells is heaven.

The fact that Esther was of Jewish extraction might have militated against her elevation, therefore she preserved a wise reticence. Time is on the side of him who knows how to wait. Mordecai does not enforce either falsehood or deceitfulness.

but simply patience for the period to arrive when truth may be revealed with advantage. An untruth must be scorned; but the man who tells the truth at unseasonable periods, or in a wrong spirit, may do more harm than good. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." The prudent man foreseeth the evil and taketh all lawful methods for its prevention. Christianity teaches foresight. Prudence is commended both by nature and by revelation. But it must not degenerate into cunning. Mordecai was prudent in the management of his household. He trained Esther well, for she did the commandment of Mordecai like as when she was brought up with him. Good training, as a general rule, makes good children. "Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The well-trained child will not be likely to forget its duty even in the palace. Parents often blame their children for following evil courses; but if such parents closely examined they might find reason to blame themselves. In this age children forget the commandment of their parents long before the palace is reached.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 8—10.

Ver. 9. *Esther was brought.* Poor Esther, who had been so kindly cherished by Mordecai, was now led away from his house to be the slave or the beloved wife of the great king, as his caprice should determine.

1. Her consent was not asked.

2. The consent of Mordecai, her adopted father, was not asked.

3. They were both slaves to a despotic master, and had, therefore, no choice. Blame not Esther, therefore, but pity her, when ye hear that, like so many other maidens, she was led away to the house of the king's women. She was not an actor, but a sufferer. Had she been left to her choice it is probable she would have chosen the poorest Jew that was faithful to his religion for her husband, in preference to the great king.—*Dr. Lawson.*

There is, unquestionably, a difficulty connected with this 8th verse.

1. If Mordecai, of his own accord, presented Esther as a candidate for the royal favour, then he acted in opposition to the law of Moses, which forbade that the daughters of Israel should be given to the heathen. It would be no apology for his conduct that he designed by what he did to advance the interests of his nation. What is forbidden by the law must not be done that good may come of it.

2. Many interpreters suppose that those who were commissioned to select the virgins for the king's seraglio executed their office without respect to the feelings of the parties interested. Esther was taken, therefore, without there being any choice left, either to her or Mordecai, in the matter.

3. Others that, as the whole was so manifestly providential, Mordecai may have received special intimation from heaven to bring his orphan cousin under the notice of the king's officers. There is nothing in the history to warrant this opinion; therefore we embrace the first supposition as the most probable account of the affair.

4. But whatever may have been the feelings of Mordecai and Esther, we see the special workings of Providence in her behalf. She obtained favour of the chief of the eunuchs above all the other maidens who had been committed to his care, so that, without solicitation on her part, not only was there more than ordinary indulgence toward her, but she was even treated with a degree of respect that seemed, as it were, the prelude to yet higher advancement. The commencement of Esther's life in the palace gave promise of a prosperous issue.—*Dr. Davidson.*

Ver. 9. Esther's Preferment. Who would have thought (*a*) *a Jew*, (*b*) *a captive*, (*c*) *an orphan*, was born to be a queen, an empress! So it proved. *Providence sometimes raiseth up the poor out of the dust to set them among princes.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

Discipline of the passions. The passions may be humoured until they become our master, as a horse may be pampered till he gets the better of his rider; but early discipline will prevent mutiny, and keep the helm in the hands of reason. Properly controlled, the passions may, like a horse with the bit in his mouth, or a ship with the helm in the hand of a skilful mariner, be managed and made useful.

A rich landlord once cruelly oppressed a poor widow. Her son, a little boy of eight years, saw it. He afterwards became a painter, and painted a life likeness of the dark scene. Years afterwards, he placed it where the man saw it. He turned pale, trembled in every joint, and offered any sum to purchase it, that he might put it out of sight. Thus there is an invisible painter drawing on the canvas of the soul a life likeness, reflecting correctly all the passions and actions of our spiritual history on earth. Now and again we should be compelled to look at them, and the folly of our acts will sting us, as it did the landlord, and also Ahasuerus.

Control of anger. Socrates, finding himself in emotion against a slave, said: "I would beat you if I were not angry." Having received a box on the ears, he contented himself by only saying, with a smile, "It is a pity we do not know when to put on the helmet." Socrates, meeting a gentleman of rank in the streets, saluted him; but the gentleman took no notice of it. His friends in company, observing what passed, told the philosopher "That they were so exasperated at the man's incivility, that they had a good mind to resent it." He very calmly replied, "If you met any person in the road in a worse habit of body than yourself, would you think you had reason to be enraged with him on that account? Pray, then, what greater reason can you have for being incensed at a man for a worse habit of mind than any of yourselves?" That was a brave, strong man.

Impressions of sin. The great stone book of nature reveals many records of the past. In the red sandstone there are found, in some places, marks which are clearly the impression of showers of rain, and these are so perfect that it can even be detected in which direction the shower inclined, and from what quarter it proceeded—and this ages ago. Even so sin leaves its track behind it, and God keeps a faithful record of all our sins.—*Biblical Treasury.*

"If you cut a gash in a man's head, you may heal it; but you can never rub out, nor wash out, nor cut out the scar. It may be a witness against you in his corpse; still it may be covered by the coffin, or hidden in the grave; but then it is not till decomposition shall take place, that it shall *entirely* disappear. But, if you smite your soul by sin, you make a scar that will remain; no coffin or grave shall hide it; no fire, not even the eternal flames, shall burn out sin's stains."

Counterfeit repentance. Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance. The devil knows too well the value of the precious grace not to dress up spurious imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin there will always be bad money.—*Ryle.*

Repentance before pardon. The first physic to recover our souls is not cordials, but corrosives; not an immediate stepping into heaven by a present assurance, but mourning, and lamentations, and a little bewailing of our former transgressions. With Mary Magdalene we must wash Christ's feet with our tears of sorrow, before we may anoint his head with "the oil of gladness."—*Browning.*

In all parts of the East, women are spoken of as being much inferior to men in wisdom; and nearly all their sages have proudly descanted on the ignorance of women. In the Hindoo book called the 'Kurral,' it is declared, "All women are ignorant." In other works similar remarks are found: "Ignorance is a woman's jewel. The feminine qualities are four—ignorance, fear, shame, and impurity. To a woman disclose not a secret. Talk not to me in that way; it is all female wisdom."—*Roberts.*

Degradation of woman. The farmers of the upper Alps, though by no means wealthy, live like lords in their houses, while the heaviest portion of agricultural labour devolves on the wife. It is no uncommon thing to see a woman yoked to the plough along with an ass, while the husband guides it. A farmer of the upper Alps accounts it an act of politeness to lend his wife to a neighbour who is too much oppressed with work; and the neighbour, in his turn, lends his wife for a few day's work, whenever the favour is requested.—*Percy.*

Radical reform. A small bite from a serpent will affect the whole body. There is no way to calm the sea but by excommunicating Jonah from the ship. If the root be killed, the branches will soon be withered. If the spring be diminished, there is no doubt that the streams will soon fail. When the fuel of corruption is removed, then the fire of affliction is extinguished.—*Secker.*

Individual responsibility. Daniel Webster was once asked, "What is the most important thought you ever entertained?" He replied, after a moment's reflection, "the most important thought I ever had was my individual responsibility to God." There is no royal road, either to wealth or learning. Princes and kings, poor men, peasants, all alike must attend to the wants of their own bodies, and their own minds. No man can eat, drink, or sleep by proxy. No man can get the alphabet learned for him by another. All these are things which everybody must do for himself, or they will not be done at all. Just as it is with the mind and body, so it is with the soul. There are certain things absolutely needful to the soul's health and well-being. Each must repent for himself. Each must apply to Christ for himself. And for himself each must speak to God and pray.—*Ryle.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 11.

MORDECAI'S LOVING SOLICITUDE.

THE histories of Mordecai and Esther are very closely interblended. They run side by side, like the two differently-coloured rivers—the Arve and the Rhone. But the course of one is from time to time being crossed and coloured by the course of the other. Esther played a leading part in the deliverance of the Jewish nation from threatened destruction, but she owed very much to the teaching, the influence, and the wise directions of Mordecai. To Esther belonged the glory of pleading with King Ahasuerus, and securing the rights of the oppressed; but to Mordecai belonged the glory of directing her movements. She was the seen, and he the unseen worker. And these latter often do the most important work, though they are sometimes left to pine away in obscurity. The skilful workman invents and gains little advantage; while the cunning capitalist uses the invention and flourishes. The poor wise man saves the city, but his services are not requited. The thinker creates in secret, and receives small rewards; while the talker uses the thinker's materials, and reaps a harvest of applause and material benefits. However, Mordecai was not unrewarded, for Esther was neither ungrateful nor unmindful of her obligations. These two work and reap together. They sow in tears, in fasting, and in prayers; but they reap in victory, in light, in gladness, and in honour. Let us believe this for our consolation, that work done for God cannot die. Workers in the dark and workers in the light will meet together in the rewarding presence of infinite mercy.

I. **Mordecai's loving solicitude.** The title by which Mordecai was designated was "the Just." This is a better title than that of earl or noble, of king or prince. What a blessing to a nation when men that are just in the broadest sense of that word direct its affairs, or even dwell near its palace gates! Just men are required to save nations from decline and from final overthrow. Mordecai, however, was no stern embodiment of justice. In him it was tempered by mercy. Kindness was also his characteristic. There was in him a wonderful tenderness which made him adored of his own people. He was true to the claims of relationship, and he adopted Esther as his own child. The orphan's helpless state appealed to his manhood, and he practically said, I will be thy protector. In protecting her he benefited both himself and his whole nation. There is beautiful humanness in the record—"He brought up Hadassah." Mordecai loved the child, and his affection grew as he watched her developing loveliness. And when she was parted from him he followed her with loving solicitude. Space separated, but love united. Mordecai showed the loving anxiety of a true father for an absent child.

II. **This loving solicitude was of Divine origin.** It is true indeed that all our good is Divine. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But we may here note a special endowment. God intervenes in human affairs. He makes use of human passions for the promotion of his merciful purposes. And this was part of the Divine plan that Mordecai and Esther should be closely knitted together; for both had important work to do, and for both a great destiny was assigned. Human reasons may be given to account for Mordecai's love for Esther, but there were also Divine reasons. The Divine is ever working in and by the human. One man is attracted to another by an unknown force. That attraction is heaven-implanted: God's agents are not as solitary as they seem. The reformer is the outcome of the thoughts and feelings of his time, working it may be in secret. Mordecai is essential to Esther. His loving solicitude was a vital force in her wondrous career.

III. This loving solicitude quickened Mordecai's discernment. True love is not blind, as sometimes it is represented. It is a quickener of the discerning faculty. It is sharp to apprehend danger. The mother's ear is quick and her eye is keen to detect the approach of evil to her offspring. Mordecai at once perceived the danger to which Esther was exposed by the new position to which she had been taken. We have good reason for anxiety when our children are lifted to the heights of prosperity. Many sons and daughters have been ruined in palaces who, humanly speaking, would have remained virtuous in cottages.

IV. This loving solicitude taught Mordecai a true creed. Love is light. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in a clear apprehension of Divine truth and of Divine methods. The heart and the head must be clarified by love's indwelling, as well as enlightened by knowledge, if there is to be the possession of sound doctrine. Mordecai might believe in predestination. He might feel assured that his niece or cousin was God's "chosen vessel." But love taught him better than to let the mysteries of Divine decrees interfere with the practical duties of life. "Although he trusted God with his niece, yet he knew that an honest care of her might well stand with faith in God's providence. God must be trusted, but not tempted by the neglect of careful means."—*Trapp.*

V. Thus Mordecai's love made him watchful. How Mordecai came to possess the privilege of walking every day before the court of the women's house—whether he was one of the king's eunuchs, or whether he secured the privilege by purchase—we cannot tell. But there he was, watching with intense interest the maiden's career. The sentinel at his post. The sailor at the helm. So Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house. His love grew by the withdrawal of its object. His anxiety increased as the danger enlarged. We should be watchful for the welfare of others. Mordecai symbolizes the love of the eternal Father. God watches to know how his people do. Esther could not see Mordecai in his daily walks, but he was watching. We cannot see God, but he too is watching. We cannot feel God, but he is protecting. Our vision is not as the Divine vision. Ours cannot pierce the clouds and the darkness which shroud and conceal the infinite. But the Divine vision knows no obstruction. God knows all, and ever watches. Trust ever in the abiding love and continued watchfulness of an unchanging God.

VI. Mordecai's love rendered him self-forgetful. He did not stop to think that his conduct might appear unseemly as he walked every day before the court of the women's house. Love is unconscious of self. It goes out in supreme regard towards the object of attachment. We fancy Mordecai faithful at his post in spite of the frowns of stately courtiers or the ridicule of fawning menials. This speaks of the nobler self-forgetfulness of a mightier love. Even Jesus pleased not himself. He walked every day before the courts of men's and women's hearts, though they rejected his love and despised his beneficent ministry. He still walks. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. At the door of many hearts he is knocking now.

VII. Mordecai's love concerned itself about Esther's highest welfare. It is a suggestive expression—To know the peace of Esther. True peace is not possible where the soul is not in a right condition. There is no peace to the wicked. That love is poor which does not seek the welfare of the whole nature. How many fathers would feel that their children were all right if they saw them only in the outer courts of a palace! But oh, there was danger in the palace of Ahasuerus. And there is danger in the palace even of our gracious queen. Right parental love asks how the child is doing both temporally and spiritually, and what is to become of him or her both in time and in eternity. **How are you doing? Are you on the way to the palace of heaven?**

Suggestive Comments on Verse 11.

1. Mordecai was so deeply interested in the fate of Esther, that day after day he was found watching any opportunity that might occur to learn from some eunuchs passing in or out how Esther fared, and what her prospects were. Perhaps there may have been others in similar circumstances with himself, solicitous about their daughters or friends; and if so, his conduct would attract the less notice. But what we have principally to remark is the paternal interest which all along he took in the orphan whom he had reared. She was evidently his chief earthly care; and now, when she was, as it were, taken out of his hand, and no longer dependent upon his bounty and his kindness, he was as much concerned about her as when in her childhood she had sat upon his knee and returned his affectionate embrace. And so parental love is always exhibited. Although the grown-up youth is treated differently from the mere child, and there may be fewer of the words and outward tokens of endearment than there were, the heart of the parent has not become colder; but there are now deep anxieties connected with the progress of the youth, with his settlement in life, and his whole future career, which were not felt before; and though it may not outwardly appear, the most solicitous and intense affection is experienced by the parent at the time when the objects of it are beginning to feel that they can do something for themselves in the world.—*Davidson.*

2. Parents and guardians might take an example from Mordecai. There was danger in the palace of a heathen king, but there is danger also in a great city. Let there be solicitude for those who are exposed to its temptations—the solicitude which leads to watchfulness, and finds its expression in prayer. If there is the oppression of conscious weakness and separation, the more reason for laying the case before him who can keep "the feet from falling, the eyes from tears, and the soul from death."—*McEwan.*

3. Mordecai had taken Esther for his child, and was curious of her welfare, though she was now grown up, and preferred at court. The court, he knew, was an ill air for godliness to breathe in. His care was, therefore, that she might have Gaius's prosperity, even *mentem sanam in corpore sano*, a sound mind in a sound body. The Turks wonder to see a man walk to and fro, and use to ask such an one what he meaneth? and whether he be out of his way, or out of his wits?—*Trapp.*

Mordecai was so much older than Esther as to make it natural for him to assume toward her the position of a father. What he was in the matter of occupation we can only guess, when we see him take easily to the place of a porter at the palace gate, and when we find him turn as easily to the business of a scribe. But there is no guess-work as to what Mordecai was in the matter of character. He showed "piety at home." When his uncle died, leaving on the world a fair girl, who, it would seem, had never known a mother's care, he took his cousin for his own daughter, and brought her up. How wisely and piously he did so Esther's conduct will prove. We shall presently see how he proved himself a faithful, sharp-eyed servant, and fearless in the right; and the issue of the story will reveal his heroic public spirit. This Mordecai is altogether an admirable man; of good natural powers, enlarged and applied by religion; wise, sterling, a man who can afford to wait; worth a thousand Ahasueruses.—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 12—14.

The Vanity of Earthly Hopes.

Here is a vivid description of the means taken to minister to and to gratify the carnal pleasures of a depot. Sensuality is permitted without stint. Manhood is lowered. The animal is made supreme. Ahasuerus the king is turned into

Ahasuerus the slave—the slave of degrading lusts. Men have not the same opportunities of self-degradation as were provided for this Eastern monarch. But still men may give way to the sensual. Let them avoid the earthly and the sensual, for their climax is the devilish. Now consider the unhappy case of these poor virgins.

I. The great preparation. For twelve months these unhappy victims were being prepared for the great occasion that would most likely occur only once in their lives. Oil of myrrh and sweet odours were at their disposal in abundance. The choicest garments and rarest jewels were in readiness. Female vanity could for once gratify its propensity for outward adornments. Through all time men and women will make great preparation to render the external attractive, while the internal is neglected. Even now women will dress and trick themselves up for a state reception of a few moments' duration. Very few make earnest preparation to dress the soul, and to be ready for heavenly reception.

II. The flattering hopes. Each virgin would doubtless entertain the hope of becoming queen in place of the deposed Vashti. What a delightful prospect! How flattering the hopes that would flutter in each virgin's mind! We please ourselves thus with fond delusive hopes. Well is it for us that hope is so buoyant in this dark world. After all, these flattering hopes are of great service to us in our chequered career.

III. Great preparations wasted. These virgins derived little earthly profit from all their planning and arranging. What a picture this of the wasted preparations in the lives of most! Much money is spent on the boy's education, and just as he reaches manhood death comes and seizes the prey. The lovely maiden droops and dies ere the flower of her beauty is fully blown. The prince is killed by the weapons of savages before he has had time to achieve a name and to lay claim to imperial dignity. The pen falls from the writer's hand just as he is beginning to give permanence to the laboured and matured thoughts of his mind. The world is full of ruins. Wasted preparations strew the ground.

IV. Flattering hopes destroyed. These virgins were sent back into the chambers of the concubines—"the prison of sad and withered hearts." There are many prisons that we do not see. Imprisoned souls endure the saddest punishment. Withered hearts! who shall count them? Flattering hopes destroyed! who shall tell their appalling number? Every life has its own long, dreary list of blasted hopes.

Learn—(*a*) that *preparation for heavenly service is never wasted.* Perhaps life is not so full of waste as we have supposed. The Divine Builder can turn our very ruins to useful purposes. The preparation that was wasted in one man's life may be of service to another. However, the true way to avoid possible waste is to make this earthly life a preparation for the heavenly. We prepare to enter the court of earthly kings, and are never summoned to the royal presence, but those who prepare in the right spirit and according to the gospel method to enter the court of the King eternal will most assuredly be summoned to stand in that Presence where there is fulness of joy. (*b*) That *the hopes suggested by the gospel cannot be destroyed.* The hopes of the worldling are too often delusive. The hopes of the hypocrite shall perish. But the hope of the righteous is gladness. To the man who builds by faith on the gospel of God's dear Son there is gladness in anticipation and gladness in fruition. Those who, justified by faith in Christ, and sanctified by the Divine Spirit, entertain the hope of being for ever in heaven, will never be sent back to the prison of sad and withered hearts. (*c*) If the children of this world make such great preparations for positions they may never be called to occupy, *what preparations should the children of light make to occupy aright the high position to which they will be most certainly called.* "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Suggestive Comments on Verses 12—14.

What strife, what emulation was now amongst all the Persian damsels that either were or thought themselves fair! Every one hopes to be a queen, and sees no reason why any other should be thought more excellent. How happy were we if we could be so ambitious of our espousals to the King of heaven! Every virgin must be six months purified with the oil of myrrh, and six other months perfumed with sweet odours, besides those special receipts that were allowed to each upon their own election. O God, what care, what cost is requisite to that soul which should be addressed a fit bride for thine holy and glorious majesty? When we have scoured ourselves with the most cleansing oil of our repentance, and have perfumed ourselves with thy best graces, and our perfectest obedience, it is the only praise of thy mercy that we may be accepted.—*Bishop Hall.*

No doubt the virgins generally took the opportunity—one that would occur but once in their lives—to load themselves with precious ornaments of various kinds — necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and the like.—*Rawlinson.*

What care and cost is required for the decoration of the soul when it would prepare as an acceptable bride for Jesus.—*Starke.*

Because God desires more and more to have delight in us, and to draw nigh to us, and therefore he more and more goes on to purge us. For though he loves us at first, when full of corruptions, yet he cannot so much delight in us as he would, nor have that communion with us, no more than a husband can with a wife who hath an unsavoury breath or a loathsome disease. They must therefore be purified for his bed, as Esther was for Ahasuerus. "Draw nigh to God," says James, "and he will draw nigh to you;" but then you must "cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts," as it follows there; God else hath no delight to draw nigh to you.—*Goodwin.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 15, 20.

Esther's Elevation.

God in the mysterious nature of his operations puts down the mighty from their seats, and exalts them of low degree. In all the changes of life, in the rise and fall both of nations and of individuals, we shall only be able to walk with calmness as we see the ruling purpose of the Supreme moving on to its accomplishment. Let the history of God's movements in the past be the interpreter of the present, and impart settled faith in the unerring wisdom of the Infinite. The Vashtis may fall, but their fall is the Divine stepping-stone by which the orphaned Esthers rise to greatness in order to be of service to humanity. Written history reveals the working of God; and when the history of the present is written it will declare that God is still working. Let us now read the history of Esther's elevation so as to teach in the present.

I. God's servants patiently wait his time. That Esther was the servant of God is plain from the whole of this history. She was his chosen vessel. Here she waits the Lord's time. She is in no hurry; she manifests the calm of conscious greatness. True greatness has nothing to lose by patience. It may be objected that she was compelled to wait her turn. It may, however, be replied that many are unwise enough to try and fight against the force of Providence, and seek to hurry on Divine movements. Esther did not take this course because she had been taught Divine lessons. She could wait. Blessed are they who know how to wait when waiting is the Divine appointment. Blessed are they also that know

how to move when the turn has come to go in unto the king. Ready to serve both by waiting and by moving is the characteristic of God's servants.

II. God's servants have sustaining confidence. Esther required nothing but what the king's chamberlain appointed. As a wise woman, she would take what was seemly and necessary for her adornment, but, as one conscious of being sent on a Divine mission, she was not bent upon decking herself with gaudy jewels. She let her beauty tell its own thrilling story, and work in its own magical way. The goodness of her soul shone right through her physical form, and rendered her more attractive than if she had worn the most costly garments. She had a sustaining confidence which made her not over-anxious and exacting in her requirements. A sincere effort to serve God will deliver from the evils of over-anxiety. Nature requires little, and grace less. She required nothing but what was appointed. Oh for grace to lessen the number of our requirements, to learn the difficult lesson, in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content.

III. God's servants find favour in unexpected quarters. From a human point of view it was a surprising thing that the king should so suddenly find his love drawn out towards this captive and orphaned Jewess. But more surprising still is the fact that Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. Was green-eyed Jealousy on that occasion conquered? Did none of the on-looking virgins attempt to depreciate her beauty? Did none object to the shape of her nose, the colour of her hair, or the tone of her complexion? Was no whisper heard against this lovely maiden? Women are sharp to find out each other's defects, and yet Esther escaped because she was Divinely fashioned and Divinely guided. She was admired by all because she was God's servant. Hatred is sometimes the penalty of faithfulness in God's service; but if persecuted for Christ's sake we shall receive the favour of heaven, which is better than the favour of earth. However, we may find this, that God raises up for his servants friends in unexpected quarters. Joseph found friends and helpers in the prison. Daniel had lions for his friends and a king for his comforter. Bunyan was trusted by his jailor.

IV. God's servants are royal. The king set the royal crown upon Esther's head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. But Esther needed no earthly insignia to set forth her royalty. She was God's servant, and all his servants are royal. A kingly seed, a royal race are the children of God. She was a queen by virtue of a Divine creation. She was royal by reason of the queenly magnificence of her character. Her virtues were her crown. They shone with brilliancy far surpassing the virtue of pearls or rubies. The crown which Ahasuerus placed on her head will crumble to dust, but the crown of her virtues will never suffer any tarnishing of its lustre. What ambition there is to receive royal crowns from earthly kings! What commotion in the seraglio when the whisper went forth, Esther has received the crown royal! How soldiers will fight, and what hardships officers will endure in order to receive the decorating ribbon or medal from an earthly sovereign! But this is as nothing to the position of those who are to receive the heavenly crown from the hand of the King eternal. Happy day when Jesus shall set the royal crown of his approval upon the heads of his favourites.

V. God's servants are instruments of good. We are not now about to refer to Esther's great life-work in the deliverance of her people from a great danger, but to the facts here stated. In order to celebrate Esther's elevation to the crown, the king made a great feast, called Esther's feast, to all his princes and servants, and granted release to the provinces. This release may be understood either of a remission of labour or a remission of taxes. It is highly probable that it refers to the appointment of a holiday, on which there would be a resting from labour. Finally, the king gave gifts with royal munificence.—*Keil.* When the righteous are exalted the nation has reason to rejoice. Even material benefits result from their elevation. The country owes more to the presence in it of the righteous than it either understands or is prepared to admit. The king's former feast ended disastrously, but we

do not read of any evil resulting from the joyful festivities on this occasion. May we suppose that Esther's presence exerted a salutary and restraining influence? The righteous should be saving forces.

VI. God's servants are fitted for the positions to which they are raised. Esther was gifted with the power of silence, and this is a rare gift. She did not show her kindred nor her people, for the set time had not yet arrived for the announcement. Intoxicated with her success, she might have made an untimely boast of the lowness of her origin. But she did not, for she was Divinely fitted. She knew both when to speak and when to keep silence. God fashions and educates his servants for the particular spheres they are designed to fill, and for the special duties they are intended to discharge.

VII. God's servants in highest positions do not overlook the minor moralities. It would, we may suppose, have been called a minor immorality had Esther neglected the commandment of Mordecai. She was now a queen, and was she to be in subjection to her uncle? There may be minor and major in moralities, but unfaithfulness in the least leads to unfaithfulness in the greatest. Esther was convinced of Mordecai's wisdom and impressed with a sense of his kindness, and therefore felt that his commandment was binding. We cannot afford, even in highest positions, to be deaf to the voice of wisdom. The commandments of wise old men have in them a Divine force. Those Esthers are Divinely wise who pay respectful attention to the weighty words of the aged Mordecais.

Observe that all Christians are the servants of God, whether the earthly position be high or low. They are royal, whether dwelling in a cottage or reigning in a palace. They should not be over-anxious about the good or great things of this life. Esther required nothing. They should move with quiet faith and restful confidence in their God. They should seek, above all, to fit themselves to be instruments of good to their kind.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 15.

Now when the turn of Esther, &c.—Then, and not till then. So when Joseph was sufficiently humbled, the king sent and loosed him; the ruler of the people let him go free. When David was become weaned from the world, when his heart was not haughty, nor his eyes lofty, then was he advanced to the kingdom. He that believeth maketh not haste. God's time is best; and as he seldom cometh at our time, so he never faileth at his own.—*Trapp.*

She required nothing.—As other maids had done to set out their beauty, but contenting herself with her native comeliness, and that wisdom that made her face to shine, she humbly taketh what Hegai directed her to, and wholly resteth upon the Divine providence.—*Trapp.*

Undazzled by splendour and royalty, the tender virgin rejected all these things. With noble simplicity she took the ornaments, neither selecting nor demanding anything, which the chief chamberlain brought to her. Even after she became queen above all the wives of the king, her heart still clung, not only with gratitude, but with childlike obedience, to her pious uncle and foster-father, as in the time when he trained her as a little girl.—*Stolberg.*

Let then both men and women learn by this case so to direct all their aims and desires as to please God alone by the ornament of a good conscience, and by the forms of minds well adjusted; but to despise the adventitious bodily ornaments of this world as vain in his sight, and by this piety gain the sure rewards of heaven. For this alone is the true beauty, which is precious in God's view, and which causes us to be approved by the King of kings, and joined to him in spiritual matrimony. . . . . Surprising that even the heathen saw and taught this, for Crates says, That is ornament which adorns, but that adorns which makes a woman more adjusted and more modest. For this end neither gold, nor gems, nor purple avails,

but whatever has the import of gravity, modesty, and chastity.—*Feuardent.*

That mind is truly great and noble that is not changed with the highest prosperity. Queen Esther cannot forget her cousin Mordecai; no pomp can make her slight the charge of so dear a kinsman; in all her royalty she casts her eye upon him amongst the throng of beholders; but she must not know him; her obedience keeps her in awe, and will not suffer her to draw him up with her to the participation of her honour. It troubles her not a little to forbear this duty, but she must; it is enough that Mordecai hath commanded her not to be known who or whose she was.—*Hall.*

Nor was Esther behind with her grateful returns. Too many when suddenly exalted forget their former friends, or, what is as bad, forget themselves, become vain and arrogant, and so impatient of admonition and good advice. Children, when they grow up, are apt to think that they are released from all obligation even to their natural parents; they become wise in their own conceits, and spurn advice as if it were an undue assumption of authority. But "Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him." The least signification of his will was a law to her; for she knew that he would require nothing of her inconsistent with her duty to God and her husband. He had enjoined her not to make known her kindred or her people; and this she religiously abstained from, not only when she was under the conduct of Hegai, but after she was seated in the affections of Ahasuerus, and had come to the kingdom. "Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her." She, no doubt, felt a strong desire to make the avowal, and to use her interest with the king for the advancement of her kind benefactor. But even this generous feeling she repressed, because it would have led to a transgression of his command. To testify her gratitude she would not disobey him, nor run the risk of displeasing him. And she acted thus, though it does not appear that he acquainted her with his reasons for concealment. We may be sure, however, that Mordecai did not impose this silence arbitrarily; and his caution confirms the remark already made, that he looked forward to something more important that was to be accomplished by the elevation of his daughter, and waited for the opportune occasion when the disclosure of her people and relationship to him would be the means of advancing it. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning," and "the secret of Jehovah is with them that fear him."—*McCrie.*

There is everything about Esther to engage our interest and sympathy. It is sad enough to find ourselves, even in adult years, suddenly in the front rank through the falling of those who stood in nature before us; but "she had neither father nor mother" while still a child, needing all care. And there were serious aggravations of her orphanhood—her sex, her belonging to the race of exiles, her beauty. But the Lover of little children, the Father of the fatherless, who had said to these captives, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive," had provided for Esther one who proved to her both father and mother. And there are early indications that the orphan girl was a daughter of the Lord Almighty; she obeyed Mordecai, even when beyond his control; and she was modestly free from love of display, a feature scarcely to be expected in a favoured beauty unless she had also grace. At length she became queen consort, and Mordecai's faith had its reward. For we are disposed to think it must have been in faith that he had committed her to the various perils of these twelve months. The parallel between Esther and the child Moses is striking (as McCrie shows in his lectures): each exceeding fair; each raised from lowly station to a place beside the throne; each a deliverer of Israel; each cast upon the waters for a time, although the waters on which Esther was cast were far more perilous than the Nile, and the royal home than the ark of bulrushes; so that we may credit Mordecai with faith like that of Amram and Jochebed. At least it is certain that Esther's advancement, while it came through the beauty which gave

her her name, did not come through that alone or chiefly. God gave her favour in the sight of all them that looked on her;" her Father sent her to her husband, a poor orphan indeed, but with that "discretion" without which her comeliness would have been in his judgment "as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout."—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 21, 23.

THE PLOTTERS AND THE COUNTERPLOTTER.

In this passage we have a striking illustration, even in a temporal point of view, of James's statement, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here in these two plotters—Bigthan and Teresh—are depraved affections and desires bringing forth sinfulness of purpose; it was not their fault that the sinful purpose did not culminate in the sinful deed, and they were guilty. The sinful purpose unchecked on our part renders us criminal in the sight of God, though not always in the sight of man. This sinful purpose brought upon them temporal death. "They were both hanged on a tree." Temporal death is not always the result of sinful purposes. If it were, what a valley of death this world would be. But oh, if we do not repent of sinful purposes, and fly to Jesus Christ, the sinner's refuge, spiritual death will be the inevitable result. The plotters are Bigthan and Teresh. Their design was dark and dastardly, and not to be condoned, because such plots were too common in those days. The counterplotter was Mordecai, who sat at the king's gate.

I. Notice, **Their discontentment and his contentment.** Profane history throws no light on their circumstances. We cannot tell whether or not they had a true cause for anger. We must simply abide by the statement—two of the king's chamberlains were wroth. Anger may arise from either real or ideal causes. Certainly discontentment is a fruitful source of anger. The discontented man soon finds out reasons why he should be angry. A fancied grievance is quite enough to stir up the nature and rouse the angry passions. If the truth were known, these men had very likely more reason to be pleased with the monarch for their advantages than to be angry on account of some grievance. Mordecai had not much outward reason for satisfaction. He might have reasonably expected more in consequence of Esther's elevation. But he sat with contented heart at the king's gate. He did not complain because he had not been raised to some high position at the court. He sat not as a cringing captive, not with the frown of discontent on his brows; but rejoicing, we may believe, in the elevation of her he loved, sweetly dreaming of her glory, and trying to picture to himself the salutary effect of her moral influence in that heathenish palace.

II. **Their discontentment culminates in a murderous purpose.** They sought to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus. He that hateth his brother is a murderer. Anger is a murderer, though the victim escapes with his life. Society cannot punish for unenacted murder. Human governments can only take cognizance in this respect of deeds. The Divine government exercises control in the immaterial world of thought. Thoughts are powers. Unexpressed anger is sinful if encouraged. God will try our thoughts. Who then shall stand?

III. **This contentment expressed itself in a faithful discharge of duty.** Mordecai did not say, Why should I meddle? what matters it to me what becomes of this *heathen* despot? But he practically said, Here is a great wrong being planned; it is my duty to make known the conspiracy and bring the plotters to judgment. It is required not only of those in high positions, but of those in low positions, that they be found faithful. The men sitting at the king's gate can often do more service to the nation than those sitting in the king's presence. Usefulness is required of

all, wherever found. And oh, the men at the gate of heaven's King should be faithful. Let us cultivate contented and grateful hearts with and for the dispensations of Divine providence, and thus we shall the more likely be faithful servants.

IV. Their folly and his wisdom. Wickedness is always a folly, and goodness is always wisdom. But this must especially strike the observant mind, that the wicked very often bring themselves to punishment by some egregious act of folly on their own part. The murderer in aiming at concealment pursues the very course which makes his detection easy. And these men plotted; but lo, by their folly the plot is discovered. And the thing was known to Mordecai. He took a wise course for the successful defeating of their murderous design. If they plotted cunningly, he counterplotted more skilfully. He did not demand an audience of Ahasuerus. That might have aroused the suspicions of these murderous chamberlains. But he could trust Esther. So he told it unto her, and she certified it unto the king in Mordecai's name. In dealing with the wicked we must be careful. In passing through this world we must be wise as serpents.

V. Their doom and his reward. The matter was investigated by the king, and found out as Mordecai had testified. The two criminals were hanged on a tree, *i. e.* impaled on a stake, a sort of crucifixion.—*Keil.* A speedy end was put to their plotting. Those who plot against earthly kings are sometimes apparently successful; but those who plot against the King of kings shall not always triumph. Their overthrow will be accomplished, and their punishment is ultimately certain. The circumstance was entered in the book of the chronicles, before the king, immediately after sentence had been passed by a court over which the monarch presided. And that was all faithful Mordecai appeared likely to get. No money was given him from the royal purse. No medal was struck in commemoration of his faithfulness. He was not advanced to some post of trust and of influence. His present reward was found in the consciousness of having done his duty. But other rewards followed through the guidance of him who is not unrighteous to forget. God never forgets. Words spoken to help the weak, to cheer the disconsolate, and to guide the perplexed will be remembered. The very tears shed over human woe and sin will have their place in the final adjustment. When the mighty transactions of kings and of warriors have passed into obscurity, when the researches of philosophers and of scientific men have lost their attraction, when the poet's flights have ceased to exert their wizardry, and the musician's strains to thrill, and the painter's canvas is perished like the shrivelled parchment scroll, then will shine forth in heavenly colours, stamped with Divine approval, those works of faith and those words and deeds of love which may now escape the notice of the children of this world.

Learn—(*a*) That no position of life is free from danger. The one event of death must come sooner or later, both to king and to subject. (*b*) That faithful subjects are a monarch's true protection. Let monarchs rely not on decrees, not on severity, not on soldiers, but on that love which they have kindled in the breasts of their subjects. (*c*) That faithful subjects are God-fearing subjects. (*d*) That kings should seek to surround themselves with God-fearing ministers, and should as certainly and as speedily reward those who do well as they punish the evil-doers. (*e*) But that well-doing is required in all, whether the world forgets or the world remembers and rewards.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 21, 23.

If the necessity or convenience of his occasions called him to serve, his piety and religion called him to faithfulness in his service. Two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, conspire against the life of their sovereign. No greatness can secure from treachery or violence; he that ruled over millions of men, through a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, cannot assure himself from the hand of a villain; he that had the power of other men's lives is in danger of his own. Happy is that man that is once possessed of a crown incorruptible, unfadeable, reserved for him in heaven; no force, no treason can reach thither; there can be no peril of either violence or forfeiture there. The likeliest defence of the person of any prince is the fidelity of his attendants.

Worthy dispositions labour only to deserve well, leaving the care of their remuneration to them whom it concerns; it is fit that God's leisure should be attended in all his designments.—*Bishop Hall.*

Nothing justifies us in assuming that Mordecai reported those conspirators because of selfish reasons, or in order to gain distinction and merit, or because Ahasuerus as the husband of Esther was nearly related to himself. Besides being an indication, it may be an expression of shrewdness, of his sense of duty. Although the Jew as such did not have a very warm feeling of attachment to the Persian king, still, in so far as he lived according to the Divine word, he sought to perform his obligations also toward the heathen governmental authority. Thereby he also becomes a practical illustration of the fact that the piety which is nurtured by God's word is also of benefit to the heathen state and to heathen rulers. The governments of modern times, which treat religion not only with toleration, but also with indifference, should remember that godly fear, as it is useful for all things, is also the most substantial bulwark for the continuance of the state.—*Lange.*

At the time that inquisition was made, Bigthan and Teresh might think themselves quite secure. So far as they knew, the dark plot was confined to their own breasts, and as they were both implicated, it was not likely that either of them would divulge their secret. They would continue their duties, and assume an air of indifference. One little circumstance, and another inadvertent speech, and a weapon thrust away into a corner to be ready for use, and a number of small things may have been brought to the surface, and from these a web is woven around the designing conspirators out of which it was impossible to disentangle themselves. "It was found out"—words which remind us of the final disclosure of human hearts. How much has escaped detection by men! How much have they been misled by the mere outward appearances! Thoughts and feelings, intentions and deeds have been shut in to some chamber of the heart into which the light has never been allowed to shine. The subjects of them have never reflected upon them themselves, and have guarded them from the view of others. They may even have passed through life with an unchallenged and apparently saintly character. It is only for a little while. The inquisition of men may be faulty and fail, but the inquisition of God is perfect and unqualified. When he makes inquisition for sin there shall be nothing either conceived or executed that will not be "found out." In prospect of that future revealing of the secrets of our hearts—that unveiling of ourselves to ourselves, and before all men—it is our best policy, as well as essential for our highest peace, that we should now deal honestly, candidly, almost severely, with ourselves, walking humbly and without dissimulation before all men, and earnestly pleading for God's mercy in Christ to cover the multitude of our sins. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known."

What reward was given to Mordecai by the king for his prevention of the evil which menaced him! Some commentators have drawn a lesson against

ingratitude, from the circumstance that nothing is reported as having been done for Mordecai. If nothing was done, however, it can hardly be said that nothing was intended. The whole affair was "written in the book of the chronicles before the king"—accurately set down by the scribes who were continually with the king to record all remarkable things which happened in the court, and kept by him for future reference. By and by we shall find that this register was produced, and the events now narrated were recalled to the memory of Ahasuerus, and led to the elevation of Mordecai. The reward tarried, but still it came. Men may be unmindful, but God never. And the manner in which this pious Jew was ultimately rewarded ought rather to incite us to look away from the human to the Divine, and put greater trust in the leading and recompense of God.—*McEwan.*

The narrative before us teaches, that whatever station in providence men are called to fill, they may be instrumental in conferring important benefits on others. Mordecai, a man of humble rank, exercising compassion and benevolence, trained up the orphan girl who became queen of Persia, and through whose instrumentality vast benefits were conferred on the Jews. Mordecai, who sat in the king's gate, saved the life of the king. And many incidents there are, recorded both in ancient and modern history, which illustrate the truth that in human society the several classes are so dependent on one another, that the highest may be made debtor to the lowest, and that the humblest may render services to those above them which cannot be adequately repaid. Such fidelity as Mordecai exhibited has often been exemplified.—*Davidson.*

For Esther did the commandment of Mordecai.—Her honours had not altered her manners; she was as observant of Mordecai still as ever. So was Joseph, David, Solomon, Epaminondas, and others of their old and poorer parents. Pope Benedict, a Lombard, a shepherd's son, would not acknowledge his poor mother when she came to him lady-like, but caused her to put on her shepherdess apparel, and then did her all the honour that might be. Sir Thomas More would in Westminster Hall beg his father's blessing on his knees. Mordecai was Esther's foster-father, and had given her, though not her being, yet her well-being; and hence she so respects him, and is so ruled by him. She had gotten from him that nurture and admonition in the Lord that was better to her than the crown of the kingdom; for what is unsanctified greatness but eminent dishonour? If any parents find disobedient children, let them consider whether, Eli-like, they have not honoured (I mean cockered) their sons too much, which is the reason they honour them so little now.

In those days.—While this voluptuous prince was in the glut of carnal delights his life is sought for; so slippery places are great ones set in; so doth the Lord sauce their greatest prosperity with sudden and unexpected dangers. Thus Attilas, king of the Huns, was hanged up in gibbets, as it were, by God's own hands in the midst of his nuptials.

Some great princes have wished never to have meddled with government; as Augustus, Adrian, Pertinax, who used to say that he never in all his life committed the like fault as when he accepted the empire; and many times he motioned to leave the same, and to return unto his house. Dioclesian and Maximian did so; for they found that *quot servi, tot hostes; quot custodes, tot carnifices;* they could not be safe from their own servants; but, Damocles-like, they sat at meat with a drawn sword hanging by a twined thread over their necks. Hence Dionysius durst not trust his own daughter to barb him. And Massinissa, king of Numidia, committed his safe-keeping to a guard of dogs; for men he durst not trust.

And the thing was known to Mordecai.—How he came to know it is uncertain. Josephus saith that it was revealed to him by one Barnabazus, a Jew, who was servant to one of the conspirators. R. Solomon saith that the eunuchs talked of the plot before Mordecai in the language of Tarsus, supposing that he had not understood them, and so it

came forth. Others conceive that they solicited him, being one of the keepers of the king's door, also to join with them. Howsoever it was that he got inkling and intelligence of their bloody purpose, God was in it, and good men are of his privy council. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."—*Trapp.*

Besides flatterers, despots are apt to have traitors and assassins about them, such as Bigthan and Teresh. Mordecai detected their villany, and no doubt ran considerable risk in exposing it. But he was not one of those who are honest only when honesty appears to them to be the best policy; he did the right because it was the right, faithfully and fearlessly. Therefore he would not be disappointed when weeks and months went by without the selfish king taking notice of the important service he had rendered him. He probably did not know that it "was written in the book of the chronicles before the king," for it was Esther who saw to that. There was another book of remembrance, "by seraphs writ," before One who may "hide himself," but who never forgets. "The Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Soon, following this story, we shall "return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Ver. 11. *God's kindness.* No doubt, said the Rev. John Brown of Haddington, I have met with trials as well as others, yet so kind has God been to me, that I think, if he were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed, except that I wish I had less sin. As Mordecai watched over Esther, so God watches to know how his people do. The meaning of all God's dispensations, the extent of his kindness, and the unwearied nature of his watching we shall not know till we stand in the revealing light of eternity. Oh, to believe that God's ways are best—that the storm as well as the calm, the rough as well as the smooth, the painful as well as the pleasant are indications of God's kindness.

Ver. 11. *A mother's glory.* A boy, hearing a visitor of his father make use of the familiar saying that "an honest man is the noblest work of God," made this innocent annotation upon it: "No, sir, my mamma is the noblest work of God." Let parents be as lovingly anxious for the welfare of their children as Mordecai was for Esther's; let them by judicious treatment, by wise and loving example, and by constant prayer lead them up into the beauty of holiness, and thus their memories will be blessed, and their names held in affectionate esteem. Some parents complain of a want of obedience and of reverence on the part of their children, who might with more reason complain of their own folly in not insisting upon obedience from the very first, and in not conducting themselves so as to command reverence and affection.

Ver. 15. *Virtues the true adorning.* Plutarch speaks of a Spartan woman, that when her neighbours were showing their apparel and jewels, she brought out her children, virtuous and well taught, saying, These are my ornaments and accoutrements. Esther did the like with her virtues, which drew all hearts unto her; like as fair flowers in the spring do the passenger's eyes. She had decked herself with the white of simplicity, with the red of modesty, with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of chastity; and being thus adorned and beautified, women shall have God himself to be their suitor, and all godly men their admirers.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 15. *Dress.* A woman's dress should always be modest, never arrest attention, or suggest the unchaste. "Madam," says old John Newton, "so dress and so conduct yourself that persons who have been in your company shall not recollect what you had on." A fashionably-dressed lady once asked a clergyman if there was any harm in wearing feathers and ornaments. He answered, "If you have the ridiculous vanity in your heart to wish to be thought pretty and fine, you may as well hang out the sign." Dress should be not only modest, but becoming—becoming to the stature, gait, complexion, and station of the wearer.—*The Practical Philosopher.*

Ver. 15. *Silken garments fresh.* Troya relates that Francesca and her paramour Paolo were buried together after their slaughter by Francesca's enraged husband; and that three centuries after the bodies were found at Rimini, whither they had been removed from Pesaro, with the silken garments yet fresh. But even such garments as those shall decay. They cannot resist the withering hand of old Time. All that is material must perish. But the silken garment of virtue shall be ever fresh. It will last not

merely for three centuries, but for the cycles of eternity. Fresh and beautiful for ever is this glorious garment.

Ver. 15. *Clay made fragrant by the rose.* A traveller in passing through the country in Persia chanced to take into his hand a piece of clay which lay by the wayside, and to his surprise he found it to exhale a most delightful fragrance. Thou art but a poor piece of clay, said he; an unsightly, unattractive, poor piece of clay! How fragrant thou art! I admire thee, I love thee; thou shalt be my companion; I will carry thee in my bosom. But whence hast thou this fragrance? The clay replied, I have been dwelling with the rose. Esther was not an unsightly, unattractive piece of clay; but her fragrance came not from her physical beauty, but from the fact that in her dwelt the rose of goodness. The clay of a well-shaped physical form has a certain attractiveness, but it is only rendered perfect as it enshrines and is beautified by the sweet flower of virtue. The fragrance of a holy life is far-reaching, ever attractive, and ever enduring.

Ver. 20. *Silence a virtue.* Taciturnity is sometimes a virtue, and Tacitus the best historian. Queen Elizabeth's motto was, *Video, taceo*—I see, and say nothing. Sophocles saith, nothing better becometh a woman than silence. Euripides also saith that silence, and modesty, and keeping at home are the greatest commendation to a woman that can be. Curtius tells us that the Persians never trust one whom they find to be talkative. Some know when to speak and when to keep silent, but do not act up to their knowledge. Esther had the knowledge and the grace to conduct herself according to the requirements of her condition.

"Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment."—*Polonius.*

Ver. 23. *Duty its own reward.* On the coast of Wales a vessel was being wrecked, and the life-boat men pushed out to the rescue. Again and again they braved the storm, and drove on through the surging billows, in order to save human life. When the work was completed, and the last man brought on shore, they were asked what reward could be given. And their noble reply was, that they wanted no payment, their reward was that they had succeeded in saving the shipwrecked from a watery grave. Mordecai found his reward in the consciousness of having done his duty. An approving conscience is better than the wealth of monarchs. Earthly books of chronicles may bury while they record our good deeds, but the noble worker looks above and beyond the plaudits of time.

Ver. 23. *Earth's heroes unknown.* Before men went out to the last American war, the orators told them that they would all be remembered by their country, and their names be commemorated in poetry and in song; but go to the graveyard in Richmond, and you will find there six thousand graves, over each one of which is the inscription "Unknown." The world does not remember its heroes; but there will be no unrecognized Christian worker in heaven. Each one known by all, grandly known, known by acclamation; all the past story of work for God gleaming in cheek, and brow, and foot, and palm. They shall shine as distinct stars for ever and ever.—*Talmage.*

Ver. 10. *True greatness.* Augustine says "that God is great in great things, but greatest in little things." And if we would form a true estimate of men, we must measure them not by their great things, but by their little things. Mordecai was greatest not when he was great in the king's house, but when he adopted his little cousin, and was faithful when sitting at the king's gate. A new arithmetic is required in social computations. Life's littles are really and often life's greats. Men are greatest in their little things. We do not need martyr stakes, nor battle-fields, nor any public scenery to show us the good and true man. His little acts, his daily conduct will furnish tests. One flash reveals the diamond.

Ver. 23. *Latimer and Bonner.* Bishop Latimer, when examined before Bonner, at first answered without much thought and care. But presently a startling sound falls on his ear. It is only the scratching of a pen on paper behind the curtain. Why should the bishop stop? Why should his face grow pale and his frame tremble? By means of that pen his words were being taken down to be used against him. "Suppose you knew that a register was kept by some invisible scribe of all that you think, or speak, or act; what manner of persons would you endeavour to be in the exercise of every virtue? Know, then, that none of your actions ever can be forgotten, that even your most secret thoughts are written in durable registers. The Lord hearkens and hears all that is spoken by us. He observes all that we think or do, and a book of remembrance is written before him, which will one day be opened, to the praise of them that do well, and to the confusion of the wicked. Mordecai was not presently rewarded by the king for the eminent service which he had done him. No matter; it was marked down in the king's register. If he had never been rewarded by the king, the testimony of his conscience and the assurance of Divine approbation were more to him than all that the king could bestow."—*Lawson.*

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL NOTES.] **1. After these things]** After the events related in the former chapter. **The twelfth year of the reign of Ahasuerus,** five years after ch. ii. 16, but here somewhat sooner. "The name *Haman* is probably the same which is found in the classical writers under the form of Omanes, and which in ancient Persian would have been Umana or Umanish, an exact equivalent of the Greek Eumenes. Hammedatha is perhaps the same as Madata or Mahedata (Madates of Q. Curtius), an old Persian name signifying "given by (or to) the moon."—*Rawlinson.* The term *Agag* means "the fiery," and may have been applied to persons without any reference to nationality. It was employed as a general name of dignity by the kings of Amalek. Impossible to determine Haman's nationality. We may perhaps conclude that the epithet "Agagite" is here used symbolically of a heathen enemy of the Jews. **2. Bowed]** A simple inclination of the body as to an equal in courtesy; but **reverenced]** a complete prostration in Oriental style of homage to a superior. A kind of religious homage. Mordecai's confession that he was a Jew appears to imply that the rules of his religion would not allow him to offer the semblance of Divine honours to a mortal. Mordecai is represented in the apocryphal Esther as praying: "Thou knowest, Lord, that it was neither in contempt nor pride that I did not bow to Haman; for I would have been glad for the salvation of Israel to kiss the soles of his feet. But I did this that I might not glorify man more than God; neither would I worship any, O God, but thee." **4. Whether Mordecai's matters would stand]** Whether the religious scruples of a Jew would be tolerated in opposition to Persian laws and customs. **6. He thought scorn]** Literally, it was contemptible in his eyes. **7.]** The first month Nisan corresponds nearly with our April. The twelfth month Adar with our March. **An interval of eleven months.** פּוּר is an old Persian word meaning lot (*sors*). The words "from day to day, from month to the twelfth month," must not be understood to say that lots were cast day by day, and month by month till the twelfth; but that in the first month lots were at once cast, one after the other, for all the days and months of the year, that a favourable day might be obtained. We do not know the manner in which this was done, "the way of casting lots being unknown to us."—*Keil.* But Rawlinson says *Pur* is supposed to be an old Persian word etymologically connected with the Latin *pars*, and signifying part or lot. In modern Persian *parch* has that meaning. The recovered fragments of the old language have not, however, yielded any similar root. הִפִּיל may be regarded as an impersonal verb, and refers to some one whose office it was to cast lots. **8.]** The Jews were at this time a people scattered abroad. From the fall of Samaria the tribes of Israel had become more and more dispersed among the people in all the provinces of the East, until their tribe divisions could be now but faintly recognized. Seneca says, "Such power have the customs of this detestable people already gained, that they are introduced into all lands; they the conquered have given laws to their conquerors." **9.]** Ten thousand talents of silver, reckoned according to the Mosaic shekel, are £3,750,000; according to the civil shekel, £1,875,000.—*Keil.* **10.]** The signets of Persian monarchs were sometimes rings, sometimes cylinders, the latter probably suspended by a string round the wrist. The expression here used might apply to either kind of signet.—*Rawlinson.* The signet cylinder of Darius Hystaspes bears a trilingual inscription which reads, "Darius the great king," and also a picture of the king hunting lions in a palm grove. **11.]** Some understand this to mean that Ahasuerus refused the silver which Haman had offered to him but the passage is better explained as a grant to him of all the property of such Jews as should be executed. In the East confiscation follows necessarily upon public execution, the goods of criminals escheating to the crown, which does with them as it chooses.—*Rawlinson.* **12.]** The scribes of Xerxes are mentioned more than once by Herodotus. They appear to have been in constant attendance on the monarch, ready to indite his edicts, or to note down any occurrences which he desired to have recorded.—*Rawlinson.* אֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנִים and פַּחוֹת are here placed together, the satraps of the larger provinces and the rulers among the separate peoples of the provinces. The שָׂרִים are the native so-called born princes of the different people. **13.]** By the runners, by whom they were sent, are meant the posts, the angari or pressmen, who were posted on the main roads of the empire at definite distances from each other, from four to seven parasangs, and who rapidly expedited the royal (mails) letters or commands. The three verbs—to destroy, to kill, and cause to perish—are combined to give strength to the expression. שְׁלָלָם is their property, which is called spoil because it was delivered up to plunder. **14.]** By the issue of the decree at this time (the first month) the Jews throughout the empire had from nine to eleven months' warning of the peril which threatened them. So long a notice is thought to be "incredible," and the question is asked, Why did they not then quit the kingdom? In reply we may say, (1) That many of them may have quitted the kingdom; and, (2) That those who remained may have believed, with Mordecai, that enlargement and deliverance would arise from some quarter or other. As to its being improbable that Haman should give such long notice, we may remark that Haman only wished to be quit of Mordecai, and that the flight of the

Jews would have served his purpose quite as well as their massacre.—*Rawlinson.* 15.] נְבֹכָה primarily does not mean that it was *distressed* by terror or sorrow, but that it was *perplexed*, did not know what to think of such a terrible command. The remark that "Shushan was perplexed" has been attributed to Jewish conceit, but without reason. Susa was now the capital of Persia, and the main residence of Persians of high rank. These, being attached to the religion of Zoroaster, would naturally sympathize with the Jews, and be disturbed at their threatened destruction. Nay, even apart from this bond of union, the decree was sufficiently strange and ominous to "perplex" thoughtful citizens.—*Rawlinson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1, 6.

THE PROSPEROUS WICKED MAN.

MATTHEW HENRY says, "I wonder what the king saw in Haman that was commendable or meritorious; it is plain that he was not a man of honour or justice, of any true courage or steady conduct, but proud, and passionate, and revengeful; yet was he promoted and caressed, and there was none so great as he. Princes' darlings are not always worthies."

I. The wicked man in great prosperity. History, both of nations and of individuals, repeats itself. Both in ancient and in modern times we may see the wicked in great prosperity. Haman is typical. The race is prolific. Haman is the progenitor of a long line that by skilful plotting rise above the heads of superior men. If earthly greatness be a reward, the good are not always rewarded in time. In this world rewards are not rightly administered. Push and tact get the prize. Modest talent may be commended in the song or in the oration, but may be thankful if it does not find itself compelled to enter the workhouse. Goodness in purple and fine linen is commended; but goodness personified in a certain beggar named Lazarus is not an article of modern creeds. We are still too prone to believe that Virtue fares sumptuously every day, and that only Vice is fed with crumbs and has its sores licked by the dogs.

II. The prosperous wicked man is surrounded by fawning sycophants. "All the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him." But a king's commandment is not required to secure outward homage towards those in high places. There is always a sycophantic crew ready to worship earthly greatness. Clothe a man with the outward marks of royal favour, and many are at once prepared to become his blind adulators. Christian England has not improved very much on heathenish Persia. Outward show attracts more admirers than inward worth. Imperialism is glorified in political, literary, and ecclesiastical spheres. Greatness, not goodness, is still a leading virtue in ethical systems. Prowess in arms, push in business, skill in politics, success in literature, and parade in religion are the articles of the creed in which modern society devoutly believes. The wicked Haman so long as he is prime minister must be reverenced.

III. The prosperous wicked man is surrounded by meddling sycophants. Even admirers may be too officious. If Haman had known and seen all he might have prayed, Save me from my friends. The king's servants told Haman that there was a Jew who would not reverence enthroned and bedazzled wickedness. No, they would have told him this had they told him the truth; they might have told him this had they seen Mordecai's nobility. However, their selfish zeal carried them too far. They were undermining Haman's grand position, and frustrating their own purposes of aggrandisement. How often it is that in trying to grasp too much we lose all!

IV. The prosperous wicked man finds that false greatness brings trouble. That greatness is false which is not the outcome of goodness. The course of wicked prosperity cannot run smooth. Haman meets with the checking and detecting

Mordecai. Ahab is troubled by Elijah. Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. Herod beheads John the Baptist, but still he is not free from a reproving spirit. When Mordecai refuses to bow let Haman tremble. We do not attempt to prosecute the difficult inquiry what it was which led Mordecai to refuse to bow to Haman. Much has been said and written, but no satisfactory conclusion has been reached. All that we can say is, that there must have been a strong religious motive working in the mind of Mordecai which induced him to pursue a course which exposed him to the wrath of an Eastern despot. The nobility, the heroism of Mordecai must be admired as he thus braved death itself, and refused to follow the multitude in doing evil. Oh, for more Mordecais; for those who shall dare to be singular; for those who will stand by their convictions. Let great men watch how men of strong convictions deport themselves. There is more wholesome teaching in the silent mood of the strong-minded than in the honeyed words of shallow sycophants.

V. The prosperous wicked man may learn that an unrestrained nature brings trouble. Haman was intoxicated with his greatness, and could not brook it that one poor Jew refused an outward act of homage. Haman was full of wrath, and consequently was full of trouble. Wrath is cruel, both to the subject and the object. A dark cloud gathers on Haman's countenance, for wrath drives away the cheering sunlight, and brings darkness over the whole man. One whispered hiss reaching the great man's ear is sufficient to drown the hosannas of the multitude.

VI. The prosperous wicked man unwittingly plots his own downfall. Haman's wrath led him to dangerous extremes. He vainly fancied that nothing could withstand his greatness; so he determines to take signal vengeance on Mordecai by making his whole nation suffer. It was not sufficient for this great man to touch Mordecai only. He would not demean himself by laying hands on that one dog of a Jew. He must have wholesale slaughter. Wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. Poor Haman! Already we see thee treading on a volcano. Thy hands are digging the pit into which thou shalt fall. Thy minions are already preparing the gallows on which thou thyself shalt be hung.

(*a*) *Prosperity has its drawbacks.* This is true of all prosperity, but more especially of the prosperity of the wicked. The triumphing of the wicked shall be short. Greatness purchased by the sacrifice of goodness must bring trouble to its possessor sooner or later. (*b*) "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Haman and his flatterers were dividing the spoil, but they were not happy. Mordecai was of a humble spirit, and enjoyed peace of mind. (*c*) That our greatest troubles often spring from our own depraved natures. Haman's depravity worked him misery and ruin in the end.

> "Heaven is most just, and of our pleasant vices
> Makes instruments to scourge us."

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1, 6.

We have the picture given us, and are called to study it, of a thoroughly bad man, one of his seed who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.* The greater number of bad men have some redeeming feature in their characters to which we are glad to turn for relief; but you look in vain for any redeeming feature in Haman. He was vain, false, selfish, and not merely cruel in the thoughtless way that all selfish persons are cruel, but vindictive and black-hearted. All was going well with this man. His rivals had been crushed, his seat had been set above the seats of all the noblemen at court, the king had made him his boon companion, and had issued orders that the palace servants should bow before him and do him

* John viii. 44.

reverence. He was as nearly happy as a man can be whose ruling passion is vanity; but such men hold their happiness by a very frail tenure. It does not look altogether well that Ahasuerus should have needed to give special orders about his servants bowing to Haman. Darius had not needed to do this in the case of Daniel. Had the favourite been respected and liked, men would have given him all seemly honour unbidden. But this was a very different case. Daniel carried that within himself which secured his peace, even when suddenly flung down from lofty station to the lions' den; but this little-great man was made miserable by discovering that there was a single porter who did not prostrate himself before him. "But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." It does seem a very small matter, but when such a man as Mordecai attached importance to it, we must pause and consider whether the matter was really so small as it seemed. For it is an unsafe way of reasoning to say about anything, It is only one little act; why scruple over it? If it does no good, it can do no harm; and so forth. By such reasoning habits of untruth and intemperance have many a time been formed, and what was perhaps little in itself, if it had been possible to separate it from all else, has been found to be anything but little in its results. The truth is, we cannot separate any single action from the rest of our lives, so that the importance of an action depends not on its greatness or its littleness, but on many other circumstances, such as, how often we do it, the effect it has on others, particularly its influence on our own consciences. In this case it so happened that what Mordecai did—rather what he determined not to do—proved to be of very great importance to the whole Persian empire; but he could not know that. What he did know was, that if he had once bowed to Haman his conscience would have been defiled, as surely as Daniel's would have been if he had eaten the king's meat; and a polluted conscience is no trifle. A man has to carry it about with him all day, to go to sleep with it if he can, to encounter it again when he awakes, until God purges out the stain. — *A. M Symington, B.A.*

True religion does not interfere with the ordinary courtesies of life, nor does it forbid our rendering that honour to rank and station which is their due. But when vice and real infamy are shrouded under high rank, the Christian must beware of acting so as to make it supposed that the rank forms an apology for the vice and infamy, or renders them less hateful than they really are.

It is to be regarded as a kind of retribution, in the case of ungodly and wicked men, that the very irregularity and violence of their passions contains in itself what is sufficient to embitter the whole cup of their enjoyment. This is matter of universal experience. In the instance before us, it is very plain that Mordecai's unbending and contemptuous attitude rendered Haman altogether indifferent to the homage which was rendered to him by others. Formerly he had retired from his attendance upon the king, through the crowd of obsequious and prostrate slaves, with the highest desires of his heart gratified. His greatness was acknowledged. His will was law. There was no man in the kingdom, next to the sovereign himself, to whom such incense was offered by all. He had reached a higher elevation than the greatest nobles of the kingdom occupied. Unbounded power and wealth were within his grasp, and what more could he wish for? But now one incident, in itself so trifling that we wonder it could have even occasioned him pain for a moment, strips his grandeur and power of all their charms. Mordecai will not bow to him, nor do him reverence. The slavish homage of thousands ceases to gratify him because this one man — a Jew — will not recognize his greatness, nor honour him. His feeling is brought out afterwards very graphically in the history when, after recounting to his family and friends all the dignities and advantages which, through the favour of the king, he enjoyed, he says, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

The wicked always receive part of

their punishment in the violence of some unhallowed passion which blinds them to all the real benefits of their lot. Is there not a gnawing disease in the heart of the covetous man, for example, which prevents him from enjoying the good things which are placed within his reach, just because he has not yet acquired all that he wishes to possess? And still, as he gets more and more, is he not as far as ever from being satisfied, since he has not yet reached the point at which he aims? Or, again, look to the man who is the slave of envy, and mark how miserable this base passion makes him. He has ample means of enjoyment which he can call his own, but his neighbour has something which pleases him better, and just because that one thing is awanting to himself, he can find no satisfaction in the varied blessings which a kind Providence has showered upon him. His neighbour's good is to him what Mordecai at the king's gate was to Haman. In like manner, I might advert to the working of the more violent passions of anger and revenge, as a cause of intense torment to those who cherish them, and as altogether preventing them from taking advantage of many sources of happiness which lie open to them on every side. I might also allude to the misery which wounded vanity and affronted pride often bring to those who have high notions of their own importance, as when a trifling word or action will discompose them for many days together, and deprive them of their relish for the things that formerly pleased and made them happy. But enough has been said to show how by a just retribution the ungodly, following out their natural tendencies and passions, work out their own punishment. How different is the picture presented to us where grace reigns in the heart. Although corruption is not altogether eradicated from the spiritual man, yet its power is subdued; the fierce passions are tamed, love takes the place of envy, malignity, and wrath; and the believer, seeking and finding his chief enjoyment in God, remains comparatively unruffled by those incidents which breed so much vexation and disquietude in the breast of the ungodly. The wise man says that "he who is of a merry heart hath a continual feast;" and emphatically it may be said that the heart in which the Spirit of God dwells is a peaceful sanctuary—the seat of pure enjoyment.

Satan is always ready to take advantage of the season when the mind is perturbed by any strong passion, in order to hurry his victims onward to some act of violence from which in other circumstances they would have shrunk. Haman at this time was precisely in such a mood as made him an easy prey to the enemy. His self-importance, his worldly grandeur, the king's favour, all set at nought by Mordecai, aggravated his deadly resentment, and made him seek the destruction of the whole Jewish race. It could not have been but by Satanic influence that a scheme of such vast and daring atrocity was devised. There is nothing said in the history to show that the disposition of Haman was habitually cruel, that he was one who would have taken pleasure in inflicting pain for no reason but to gratify a propensity of his nature. From the brief glances we obtain of his domestic life, he seems to have enjoyed the confidence and affection of his family, as far as was compatible with the usages of the age and country; a circumstance which certainly seems to warrant the conclusion that he was not of a temper unmixedly cruel and tyrannical. But when the master passion of revenge took possession of him, then by working upon it Satan transformed him into a very fiend. And it has always been one of the devices of the enemy to drive men into criminal excesses to their own ruin through the instrumentality of some favourite lust or appetite. It was the covetous spirit of Judas that opened a way to the tempter to hurry him to betray the Saviour. It was an unmanly fear on the part of Pilate, lest he should be misrepresented to the Roman emperor, that the tempter took occasion of to lead him, in opposition to all his convictions, to deliver up Jesus to be crucified. All need to be upon their guard, then, against the wiles of the crafty adversary, and to strive to have their desires and feelings so kept under the control of the

Divine law that he may not through their own sinful inadvertence obtain the mastery over them, and lead them captive at his will.—*Davidson.*

How insatiable is revenge, especially when it is associated with national and religious rancour! Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, and he resolves at once on the total extermination of that people. Nero wished that the Romans had but one neck, that he might despatch them at once; Haman resolves by one decree to sweep off "all the Jews which were in all the kingdom of Ahasuerus." That the quarrel was not merely personal, but was inflamed by national hatred, is evident from the designation, "the Jews' enemy," repeatedly given to Haman in this book. The discovery that Mordecai was of Jewish extraction, while it gave a keenness to his insult, added a sweetness to Haman's meditated revenge. —*McCrie.*

For the king had so commanded concerning him.—And if the king had commanded these servile souls to worship a dog or a cat, as the Egyptians did; a golden image, as Nebuchadnezzar's subjects did; to turn the glory of the incorruptible God into the similitude of a corruptible man, of four-footed beasts or creeping things, they would have done it. Most people are of King Henry's religion, as the proverb is, resolving to do as the most do, though thereby they be undone for ever.

But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.—He did not, he durst not, though pressed to it with greatest importunity. And why? Not because Haman wore a picture openly in his bosom, as the Chaldee paraphrast and Aben-Ezra give the reason; not merely because he was a cursed Amalekite; but because the Persian kings required that themselves and their chief favourites (such as proud Haman was) should be reverenced with a kind of divine honour, more than was due to any man. This the Jews by their law were forbidden to do. It was not, therefore, pride or self-willedness that made Mordecai so stiff in the hams that he would not bend to Haman, but fear of sin, and conscience of duty. He knew that he had better offend all the world than God and his own conscience.

That they told Haman.—Purposely to pick a thank and curry favour. And although it was truth they told Haman, yet because they did it not for any love to the truth, nor for respect to justice, nor for the bettering of either party, but only to undo the one and to incense the other, they were no better than slanderers.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai.—He thought it a small matter, saith Josephus, a thing below him, too little for his revenge, which, like fire, burneth all it can lay hold upon, especially when, as here, it ariseth from ambition. Haman thought scorn to foul his fingers with Mordecai alone; the whole nation must perish, and all the children of God that were scattered abroad.—*Trapp.*

"Why transgressest thou the king's commands?" The servants of the king said to Mordecai, "Why wilt thou refuse to bow before Haman, transgressing thus the wishes of the king? Do we not bow before him?" "Ye are foolish," answered Mordecai; "ay, wanting in reason. Listen to me. Shall a mortal who must return to the dust be glorified? Shall I bow down before one born of woman, whose days are short? When he is small he cries and weeps as a child; when he grows older sorrow and sighing are his portion; his days are full of wrath and anger, and at the end he returns to dust. Shall I bow to one like him? No, I prostrate myself before the eternal God, who lives for ever. He who dwells in heaven and bears the world in the hollow of his hand. His word changes sunlight to darkness, his command illumines the deepest gloom. His wisdom made the world; He placed the boundaries of the mighty sea. The waters are his, the sweet and the salt. To the struggling waves he says, 'Be still; thus far shalt thou come, no further, that the earth may remain dry for my people.' To him, the great Creator and Ruler of the universe, and to no other, will I bow." Haman was wroth against Mordecai, and said to him, "Why art thou so stiff-necked? Did not thy forefather

bow down to mine?" "How?" replied Mordecai; "which of my ancestors bowed before forefather of thine?" Then Haman answered, "Jacob thy forefather bowed down to Esau, his brother, who was my forefather." "Not so," answered Mordecai, "for I am descended from Benjamin, and when Jacob bowed to Esau, Benjamin was not yet born. Benjamin never bowed until his descendants prostrated themselves in the holy temple, when the divinity of God rested within its sacred portals, and all Israel united with him. I will not bow before the wicked Haman."—*Talmud.*

He hearkened not unto them.—He would not be persuaded from his purpose to remain true to the principles of his religion. His course was dictated not by obstinacy, but by firmness of religious principle. Herodotus relates the case of certain Spartans who visited Shushan in the time of Xerxes, and, when ushered into the royal presence, refused to prostrate themselves and worship before the king, on the ground that it was contrary to their customs to worship a man.

They told Haman.—Until they told him, Haman seems not to have noticed that Mordecai did not bow down to him. —*American Commentary.*

Haman strove to destroy all the Jews in the whole realm of Ahasuerus, as being of the same mind with Mordecai. In the West such an idea as this would never have occurred to a revengeful man; but in the East it is different. The massacres of a people, a race, a class, have at all times been among the incidents of history, and would naturally present themselves to the mind of a statesman. The Magophonia, or a great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius Hystaspis, was an event not fifty years old in the twelfth year of Xerxes, and was commemorated annually. A massacre of the Scythians had occurred about a century previously.—*Rawlinson.*

God is so great, so sovereign, that if thou pleasest him not he accounts thee an enemy; if thou beest not subject to him thou art a rebel. As kings, yea, favourites, thinking themselves so great, that if any be not wholly theirs, if any man veils not, stoops not, their spirits rise against them as enemies, as Haman's did against Mordecai; and so, in like manner, Art thou not king? says Jezebel to Ahab; and therefore judged it an affront to him to be denied anything. In like manner, Am I not God? says the Lord. If there be any perverseness of spirit shown to kings, it is interpreted enmity, because their greatness expects all should serve and be subject to them. Now the greatness of God is such as it necessarily and justly draws this on with it. Hence the carnal mind is said to be enmity against God. —*Goodwin.*

The persons with whom Mordecai had to do at the king's gate were, as has been said, probably more curious than malicious in the first instance; but a man is none the better liked for taking up higher ground than that occupied by those about him. The busy-bodies wished to "see whether Mordecai's matters would stand," whether the supreme power would recognize a Jew's conscience, and, if not, what a Jew would then do with his conscience; so they informed Haman. And they did see, plentifully. The first effect was to reveal the paltriness of Haman. He was full of rage where a man of any greatness of soul would have been only amused. "Who would be angry with a Quaker for not taking off his hat when he comes into a room?" But Haman was one of those whom if you strip, seeking to find the greatness beneath their fine clothes, lo! there is nothing! That is, nothing great or good. For there is something bad and ugly—black revenge. Justice is said to blindfold herself that she may hold the scales evenly, not knowing what has been put into each; but revenge shuts both eyes that it may see no scales at all. What monstrous disproportion between the offence and the penalty, to avenge a small personal affront received from one Jew by "causing to perish in one day all Jews, old and young." To account for this we must keep in mind the ancient national feud already explained; and we shall do well to remember that instances are not wanting of the same deadly hatred against the seed of the

woman. To say nothing of Nero or Domitian, nor of Radama in Madagascar quite recently, let us recall the well-known case of the massacre of fifty-six thousand Protestants on the eve of St Bartholomew's day in France.—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 7.

THE BLIND METHOD OF REVENGE.

This is curious, that there should be method in madness. Insanity is the result of mere mental confusion or distraction. Sometimes it arises from the preponderance of one idea, and that idea is pursued with marvellous persistence. It has its method, but by being narrow in its vision it becomes blind in its pursuit. Revenge when it becomes a master passion is the worst madness. It has its method, but no wonder that it is blind. It is persistent in seeking to carry out its revengeful project. It is patient until the time has arrived to strike the deadly blow.

I. Revenge is blind in its method. Let the conduct of Haman, as the embodiment of revenge, be our illustration. He caused the lot to be cast in order to find out the favourable day for the accomplishment of his fiendish purpose. We are astonished to find method in him who was "full of wrath;" but we are not astonished to find that he was blind in his proceeding. (*a*) He was blind to the fact that there is no chance. His course was self-contradictory. He consulted chance in order to make a definite arrangement. A kind of blindness men often display. (*b*) He was blind to the fact that so-called chance might as easily be against him as for him. He evidently thought himself all-important, and that the paper drawn out of the pitcher would most certainly have written on it the lucky day. Men that trust to chance will in the long run find that they have been fools for their pains. (*c*) He was blind to the fact that "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." It was so here. The lot was disposed to the complete discomfiture and overthrow of revengeful Haman, and to the salvation of Mordecai and his people.

II. Revenge is injurious in its persistence. Haman persisted in his revengeful purpose. The pertinacity of the man is marvellous. What a glorious revolution would soon take place if the good were as persistent in the pursuit of merciful purposes as the bad are in revengeful projects. Every bad passion is injurious in its permanence. More injurious to its subject than to its object. Haman was doing himself more injury and rendering himself more miserable than he could have done or rendered Mordecai even if all his purpose had been accomplished. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath" is a wise lesson. The wise will let their anger cool, but in the bosom of a fool it burns till morning light.

III. Revenge is destructive in its patience. Haman was willing to wait twelve months in order that his revenge might be the more signally marked, and his triumph the greater. But his very patience worked his ruin. We sometimes say time is on the side of him who will but wait. But time asks what is the character of the waiter, and what is the purpose he has in view. Time is not on the side of revengeful waiters. Time holds in its hands no rewards to be presented in the distant future to the wicked. Every man must suffer either here or hereafter who pursues a course of seeking to avenge his wrongs.

Let Haman's followers ponder the telling proverbs—"Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost;" they return, that is, to those from whom they went forth. "Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them." "Harm watch, harm catch." "Who sows thorns, let him not walk barefoot." Hear the instructive voice of Paul—"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore

if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Suggestive Comments on Verse 7.

In the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus.—When Esther had now been queen above four years, and, being greatly beloved, was in a capacity to do her people good. This was a sweet providence; the remedy was ready before the disease broke out. No country hath more venomous creatures than Egypt, none more antidotes. So godliness hath many troubles, and so many helps against trouble.—*Trapp.*

They cast Pur, that is, the lot.—The Septuagint preserves a clause of this verse which assists to explain its meaning. It thus reads, "They cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month (that he might destroy in one day the race of Mordecai, and the lot fell for the fourteenth) of the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar." From this it appears that the lots were cast in order to determine the month and the day of the month which might be most propitious for this barbarous undertaking, or most calamitous for the Jews. —*Illustrated Commentary.*

The method of procedure seems to have been this, that at the beginning of the first month Haman caused the diviners whom he kept about him to cast the lot to determine what day of the month, and what month of the year, would bring his design to a successful termination. In this manner he learnt that the thirteenth day of the twelfth month would be the propitious day. The interval was long, nearly a whole year; but this was brought about by a special providence, in order that the scheme might be defeated, and the projector of it visited with the punishment he merited. Under all systems of false religion, divination, or the attempt to pry into futurity so as to get light cast upon contingent affairs, has been largely practised. We find reference made to it in the Book of Genesis, as an Egyptian custom, when the cup which was put into Benjamin's sack is called that by which Joseph divined. The Babylonians or Chaldæans, however, seem to have been addicted to divination beyond all other nations, and were indeed proverbial for the use of it. There are several references made to this in the prophetic books. The Persians also were addicted to the same practices; and it is said that among that people even at the present day, no one commences a journey, or almost any work the most trifling, without consulting an almanac, or an astrologer, for a fortunate moment. It would seem, indeed, as if there were a natural tendency in the human mind to read futurity by certain devices of its own. We hear sometimes of individuals in our own day who are so weak as to suffer themselves to become the dupes of designing knaves, who for money pretend by certain signs and omens to foretell what will be the result of matters in which they are interested. One could afford to smile at the absurd credulity which thus allows itself to be imposed upon, if it were not that the cherishing the desire to know the future, and having recourse to any such means to have it gratified, is denounced in the Scripture as impiety. The Jewish people were solemnly warned against such procedure, that they might not by means of it degrade and pollute themselves as the heathen did. No rational man will suppose that by casting lots, or by observing the flight of birds, or by inspecting the entrails of an animal slain in sacrifice, or by astrology, or by any of the other methods which were employed to discover what day or hour would be suitable for an undertaking, or what would be the issue of it, a true result could be obtained. Yet, as all these things formed part of the instrumentality by which Satan kept up his dominion over the minds of men, we can conceive that sometimes in the Divine providence they might be permitted to take effect, to punish those who were given over to a blind and reprobate mind, and that, as in the case of Haman's lots,

there might be an overruling of human sin and folly to work out the purposes of the Divine government.

It is natural for us to desire to lift up the veil; and sometimes, in pressing emergencies, we would give much to be enabled to do this. But since the word of God tells us that all events are under his control, and that his eye is ever on his people, and all that concerns them, for their good, we may well wait patiently for the evolution of his purposes.—*Davidson.*

Superstition and imposture have always been ready to lend their aid to the worst and most diabolical deeds. It was customary among the ancients to divide their days into lucky and unlucky, and they were anxious to undertake any great work on a propitious day. Among the various ways to which they had recourse for ascertaining this was the lot, which was used on this occasion by Haman. It is of little importance to ascertain the particular mode of casting the lot, whether it was by means of dice, or other instruments cast into the urn, or by throwing arrows or other missiles, accompanied with certain magical actions.

Observe the overruling providence of God. During an interval of eleven months, Mordecai and Esther had time to use means for defeating the design, and if they proved unsuccessful, the Jews had time to shift for their lives. The hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord, who can turn them as he pleaseth. Haman was the slave of superstition, which controlled his most violent passions, and by means of it his wrath was restrained, and its intentions brought to nought. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." "Haman has appealed to the lot, and to the lot he shall go, which, by adjourning the execution, gives judgment against him, and breaks the neck of the plot."—*McCrie.*

There is a proverb to the effect that the devil limps, and any who look thoughtfully into history or more private affairs will find it confirmed. That is to say, the god of this world betrays himself, and cannot help betraying himself, by leaving some point unguarded, by doing something unwise, even when much power and cunning have been brought into play. Or, to put the same truth in another aspect, when the enemies of God and man are most busy, and seem to be most successful, "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." There were blunders in Haman's plot against the people of God which secured its failure. Why did he offer two millions sterling as compensation for the loss of revenue, at the same time that he was telling Ahasuerus it was "not for the king's profit to suffer" the Jews to live? If the king had taken time to think, he would have detected a selfish motive under the inconsistent offer. It did not escape Esther when her time came to speak.—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 8—11.

A False Aspect of the Truth.

Success begets confidence. It was so in this case. Haman had been successful, and consequently became confident. He knew his present power with the king, and therefore takes his steps accordingly. He lays his plans before he makes his wicked request unto the monarch. But a man may be blindly confident, and his over-confidence may lead to his destruction, as it did in the case of Haman. There may be too much caution. A man may be afraid to take a bold step when boldness is required and is safety. But there may be too little caution. A man, for the want of caution, may take a leap in the dark, and plunge into the abyss of ruin. Here Haman displayed a want of wise caution. He is now taking the dangerous leap. Soon we shall see him plunging in the abyss.

I. A true description. Haman had accurately studied the condition of the

Jewish people, and was acquainted with their internal regulations, and he describes them correctly. Our enemies tell us the truth. In one aspect Haman was a truthful delineator. Josephus himself could not have done better than Haman. He describes them—(*a*) As a scattered people. Throughout the extensive kingdom of Ahasuerus these Jews were scattered, mixing with the people and yet distinct. Wherever they were they preserved their nationality. Wonderful race these Jews! Wonderful in Haman's time, wonderful still in Disraeli's time. A people scattered and peeled through all time, but a people never stripped of that marvellous quality by which they are unique. (*b*) As a peculiar people. They had laws diverse from all people. These laws were God-given. These laws were the fountain from which has flowed the best judicial streams this world has seen. The ancient Jewish legislator, in the very childhood of the world's history, promulgated a legal code which nineteenth century legislators may still study with profit. No wonder that these laws were diverse from all people. These laws were Divine; other laws are human. These laws, in their leading principles, were cosmopolitan; other laws are local. These laws were intended for the formation of a glorious Divine society. Other laws are for the formation of human societies. These laws are eternal; but other laws, in so far as they are divergent, are temporary. Haman was right, and yet Haman was wrong.

II. A false implication and declaration. It is sometimes said that the tailor makes the man, and so we may say that the speaker makes or unmakes the truth. Truth may be so dressed as to look like and to do the work of falsehood. Haman makes two false implications, and one false declaration. (*a*) A scattered people, and therefore influential for evil. These Jews are amongst all the people in the provinces of thy kingdom, and therefore consider how much evil they may do. What power for sowing in all directions the seeds of rebellion! (*b*) A peculiar people, and therefore dangerous. They have laws and opinions of their own. They are likely to think for themselves. A race of thinkers is not promising soil for despots. These Jews were not molluscous animals. Despotism cannot long flourish where backboned and strong-muscled men are permitted. Haman was nearer the truth than he imagined. Here is a false declaration—"neither keep they the king's laws." The laws of God are never opposed to any laws that are for the welfare of a nation. These Jews, in so far as they were God-fearing people, would not refuse to keep any law that was for the good of the kingdom of Ahasuerus. Mordecai was a better keeper of the law than Haman.

III. An unjust inference. "Therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them." Haman's logic would not meet with the approval of Aristotle. His premises did not warrant his conclusion. Defective logic more often arises from badness of heart than from weakness of intellect. The pure in heart will come to right conclusions, though they may not have the power of putting their reasoning into syllogistic form. Oh, if the king had only then turned to the book of the chronicles, and read the record of Mordecai's faithfulness, he would have seen that it was for his profit to suffer this despised race.

IV. An artful petition. Haman artfully keeps his wily and wicked project in the background. Here is—(*a*) *Lying obsequiousness.* "If it please the king." Haman is seeking to please himself. Little he cares about the king's pleasure, so that his own revenge is satisfied. (*b*) *Feigned liberality.* How wonderfully generous malice can be! A little forgiveness to Mordecai, even if Mordecai had sinned, would have been truer liberality than this magnificent offer of wealth to be poured into the king's treasury. (*c*) *Ostentatious zeal.* How zealous people are when there is a wicked motive working. Haman pretends a great deal of zeal for the king, but he has zeal for himself. Oh, how often self creeps in when we pretend to be zealous for the Lord of hosts. Yes, when we have no pretence, when we are trying to be sincere, how much of self in our best works.

V. A weak compliance. The king at once, without inquiry, without exercising

his intelligence, gave the needful power into the hands of this wicked Haman. Weak and self-indulgent people do great harm because they will not be at the trouble to think. The ring of royal authority was given to the revengeful favourite. The king was undermining his own power. The nation has indeed reason to mourn when wicked men are exalted. What a satire is the king's declaration to Haman —unconscious it may be, but none the less biting when observed—"The silver is given unto thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee." Little good would Haman do unto the people.

In our utterances let us put the truth in its proper relations, so that a correct impression may be produced, and that no misrepresentation may be the consequence of our declarations. In our hearing of statements let us have no ear for the mere slanderer, let us properly weigh and measure the charges brought forward. Let us see to it that our motives are pure, and then our vision will be clear, our reasoning valid, and our actions honourable.

> "A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies;
> For a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
> But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

Haman's Murderous Proposal (verse 8).

Revenge is cruel, but never more cruel than when it has its foundation in mortified pride. In the passage before us it is carried to an almost incredible extent. Haman occupied the highest post of honour, next to the royal family, in the Persian empire. All the subjects in the kingdom bowed down to him. But there was a poor man, one Mordecai, who sat at the king's gate, and consequently was often passed by Haman, who refused to pay him this homage. At this neglect Haman was grievously offended. He deemed it an insufferable insult, which could be expiated only by the death of the offender. On inquiring into Mordecai's habits and connections, Haman found that he was a Jew; and conceiving probably that this contemptuous spirit pervaded that whole nation, and accounting it a small matter to sacrifice the life of one single individual, he determined if possible to destroy the whole nation at once; and accordingly he made this proposal to King Ahasuerus, engaging from his own resources to make up to the king's treasury whatever loss might arise to the revenue from the proposed measure. Now this proposal appearing at first sight so very extraordinary, I will endeavour to set before you—

I. The commonness of it. In every age of the world have God's people been hated, for the very reasons that are here assigned—"Their laws are diverse from those of all other people, neither keep they the laws of the kingdoms where they dwell." They worship the one true and living God. Of course, whatever laws are inconsistent with the laws of God they disobey. On this account they are hated, reviled, and persecuted. David tells us of confederacies formed to "cut off the Jews from being a nation." So, in the early ages of Christianity, there were not less than ten strenuous efforts made to attain this object. And at different periods since that time has persecution raged to the utmost extent to destroy, if possible, all real piety from the face of the earth. But we need not go back to former ages for an elucidation of this truth. True, the cruelties of martyrdom are stayed; but private animosity is indulged as far as the laws of the land wherein we live will admit, and every person who thoroughly devotes himself to God is made to feel its baneful influence. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Passing over the inhumanity of this proposal, as being too obvious to be insisted on, I proceed to notice—

II. The impiety of it. The very accusation brought against the Jews by Haman shows what is the real ground of enmity against the Lord's people; it is that they

serve God, whilst the rest of the world bow down to idols; and that in this determination of theirs they inflexibly adhere to the dictates of their own conscience. This is universal amongst all the people of the Lord. But this preference of God to man is the very thing which gives offence. Look at the prophets and apostles, and see what was the ground of the world's opposition to them. And this leads me to show—

III. The folly of it. Can it be thought that such feeble worms as we should be able to prevail against Almighty God? Haman, with all his power, could not prevail against the Jews, who yet, in appearance, were altogether in his hands. The whole power of the Roman empire, by whomsoever wielded, could not root out the disciples of the Christian Church, "nor shall the gates of hell ever prevail" against the weakest of God's faithful people.

Address—(*a*) Those who are the objects of the world's hatred. Realize the promises which God has given, and then say, Shall I be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be as grass, and forget the Lord my maker? (*b*) Those who are unhappily prejudiced against the Lord's people. If you cannot see with their eyes, do not endeavour to make them see with yours, unless in a way of sober argumentation and of candid reference to the word of God. To have recourse to derision or persecution of any kind will only involve your own souls in yet deeper guilt than you already lie under for rejecting the gospel of Christ. Beware how you imitate the unbelievers of former ages in opposing the work of God in others; for if you do not succeed you only fight against God for nought; and if you do succeed you will perish under the accumulated guilt of destroying the souls of others, for assuredly "their blood will be required at your hands."—*Abridged from Simeon's 'Horæ Homileticæ.'*

Suggestive Comments on Verses 8—11.

Therefore it is not for the king's profit.—See how this sycophant fills his mouth with arguments, the better to achieve his desire. An elaborate set speech he maketh, neither is there a word in it but what might seem to have weight. He pretends the king's profit and the public good, concealing and dissembling his ambition, avarice, envy, malignity, that set him a-work. Politicians when they soar highest are like the eagle, which, whiles aloft, hath her eye still upon the prey, which by this means she spies sooner, and seizes upon better. Haman holds it not fit there should be more religions than one in a kingdom, for preventing of troubles. Nebuchadnezzar was of the same mind when he commanded all men to worship his golden image. But must all, therefore, die that will not do it? and is it for the king's profit that the righteous be rooted out? Is not the holy seed the stay of the state, the beauty and bulwark of the nation?—*Trapp.*

It is not for the king's profit to suffer them.—Worldly hearts are not led by good or evil, but by profit or loss; neither have they grace to know that nothing is profitable but what is honest, nothing so desperately incommodious as wickedness; they must needs offend by rule, that measure all things by profit, and measure profit by their imagination. How easy is it to suggest strange untruths when there is nobody to make answer! False Haman! how is it not for the king's profit to suffer the Jews? If thou construe this profit for honour, the king's honour is in the multitude of subjects; and what people more numerous than they? if for gain, the king's profit is in the largeness of his tributes; and what people are more deep in their payments? if for service, what people are more officious? How can it stand with the king's profit to bereave himself of subjects, his subjects of their lives, his exchequer of their tributes, his state of their defence? He is a weak politician that knows not to gild over the worst project with a pretence of public utility.

No name under heaven hath made so many fools, so many villains, as this of profit.—*Bishop Hall.*

Along the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris, already renowned for their schools of learning; high up in the mountains of Kurdistan, where perchance their descendants linger still; all the dispersed settlers were included in those words, which might stand as the motto of the larger part of the Jewish race ever since—which might have been said of them by Tacitus in the Roman empire, or by the Arabian or English chroniclers of the middle ages. "The line of beacon-lights kindled from hill to hill along the whole route from Jerusalem to Babylon, from Olivet to Sartaba, from Sartaba to Grophniah, from Grophniah to Haveran, from Haveran to Beth-Baltin, — waving the torches upwards and downwards, till the whole country of the captivity appeared a blazing fire,"—was an apt emblem of the sympathetic links which bound all these settlements together. Of this vast race, for whom so great a destiny was reserved, the Book of Esther recognized as by a prophetic instinct the future importance.—*Stanley.*

I will pay ten thousand talents of silver.—This was above two millions of our money, which Haman offered to pay into the treasury to indemnify the king for the loss of revenue which he would sustain by the destruction of the Jews. That a foreigner, and probably a captive, was enabled at the Persian court to acquire such wealth as the offer of so enormous a sum implies, makes it less wonderful that Nehemiah was in a condition to sustain the charges of his government from his own resources. It will be recollected that Haman appears to have been the chief minister of the king, and that functionary enjoys peculiar opportunities for the acquisition of wealth. On New Year's Day the king receives the offerings of his princes and nobles. On one such occasion, when Mr. Morier was present, the offering of the person holding this office surpassed every other in value, amounting to about £30,000 in gold coin. Other statements are extant concerning the extraordinary wealth possessed by some of the subjects of the ancient Persian empire. In the reign of Xerxes a noble Lydian named Pythius entertained the whole Persian army—the largest ever assembled—on its march towards Greece; and then freely offered to contribute all his property in gold and silver to the support of the war. It amounted altogether to 2000 talents of silver and four millions (wanting 7000) of gold darics — more than four millions of our money; besides which he had, as he said, estates and slaves which would still afford him a suitable maintenance. This noble offer was declined by the king, as that of Haman was by Ahasuerus.

Sealed with the king's ring.—In the British museum are preserved specimens of Egyptian seals of the ring class. Some of them are finger-seal rings; but the larger are scarabæus or beetle seals. These are all mounted in handles, or rings of metal, in which they revolve on pivots. This was doubtless to render them more portable, while it enabled the face to be turned outward, so as to increase their effect as ornaments, and to enable them to be worn with more convenience —attached, as they probably were, to some part of the person.—*Illustrated Family Bible.*

So do injured pride, envy, malice, hatred still seek to blast the fairest reputation by baseless calumny. The word of a friend is trusted, and the slander is believed and repeated, and acquires strength from its currency. If we blame Ahasuerus for too readily listening to the invective of Haman, and condemning the Jews unheard and untried, we should be on our guard against committing the same sin, by giving heed to scandal in regard to others without careful personal inquiry and observation, lest we should be only crediting the creations of the worst passions and distempers of our fallen natures. The Saviour was calumniated by his adversaries because he spake the truth. They hated him, and therefore spake against him. And the whole history of the Church of Christ upon earth bears evidence that the policy of our great adversary is to traduce and vilify those whom he desires to ruin. By this means he would break their

influence and tare-sow all their good. Let us be on our guard against aiding and abetting him in this matter.

Another artifice of the enemy, which was also illustrated by Haman, is to assume the air and attitude of apparent disinterestedness. Judas concealed his real feelings and motives when betraying our Lord under the symbol of affection. And Haman sought to insinuate his love of the empire and the stability of the throne as his only motives for the destruction of several millions of unoffending persons, by offering to pay down ten thousand talents of silver. It reminds one of the many specious schemes which are constantly being thrust before the public by designing worldlings — who offer large bonuses with nothing to sustain their magnificent prospects. The projectors of these schemes affect only the public good—the rapid and certain enrichment of those who will give them their confidence and their money; and not until the bubble bursts do the poor victims of their deceit apprehend the real motives by which they were influenced. In like manner do early temptations to evil all hold out the promise of present good. Some pleasure to be attained, or advancement reached, or laurel wreath worn. What a piece of disguised disinterestedness was it on the part of Satan when he proposed to give to Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them! Men are not so wise and quick as was our Lord in discovering the real motive of the tempter, and resisting him by a reference to the word of God. They are captivated by the show of disinterestedness, and only come to a knowledge of their mistake in the reaping of its fruits. Meanwhile, it serves the purpose of the enemy by inciting trust, and preventing religious reflection and inquiry, just as Haman's silver talents blinded Ahasuerus to the dark-hearted malignity of their promiser. Let us bring every temptation to the test of an enlightened conscience, and the penetrating, exposing power of God's word, and under the mask of disinterestedness we shall discover the poisoned sting secreted in the suggested sin. "Do as I bid thee, O king; and thou shalt rid the empire of a mighty burden, and secure greater stability and peace for thy throne and government." No; the policy of the arch-fiend, through his agents, is not changed from that which he followed in the garden of Eden. "Am not I your disinterested benefactor?" "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."—*McEwan.*

There is a false halo of grandeur shed around the path of the conqueror, and there is not so palpable a connection between his exploits and absolute revolting ferocity, as there is between the decree of Artaxerxes and Haman, and the execution of it. But looking from the cruelty which is glossed over by the name of military glory, we even find cool, unmitigated atrocities in the records of civilized nations, which are as disgraceful to humanity as Haman's—yea, which surpass them. Haman was a heathen, a stranger, therefore, to the softening power of religion, and we see in him only an illustration of what human nature is when left to itself, without the control of any pure and heavenly influence. But what shall we say of the indiscriminate massacre of the Protestants (1572) in Paris, and other parts of France, wherein at least 70,000 persons in brief space fell victims to the bigotry and cruelty of the king and his advisers? That was a tragedy contrived in cold blood, and advised by favourites, to glut the revenge of Papal Rome. Day and hour were fixed here, as they were by Haman. But, unhappily, day and hour were kept, and the true worshippers of God, the lovers of his truth, the best friends of religion and morality, the excellent of the earth, were massacred because they would pay homage to Christ himself, and not to the Roman Antichrist. And what shall we say of the cruelties,—that is too tame a word,—what shall we say of the horrible barbarities which, by the command of the Romish tyrant, whose hands are red with the blood of the saints, were perpetrated in the valleys of the Waldenses,

when not only men, but feeble women and helpless children, were savagely tortured and slain by a brutal soldiery for no other reason than that they would worship God as his word commands? And are not scenes of equal atrocity set before us in the history of our own country, when wholesale murder was authorized by royal edict because our forefathers would not take their religion and forms of worship from the enactments of the civil powers, but would serve God as they believed the Bible required, and as their consciences approved? Haman's character is one of the blackest in history. But on a calm review, and with full allowance for the time and circumstances in which he lived, he is pure as compared with the infamous King of France, who looked from his palace window and enjoyed the scene of slaughter in his capital; with the savages who shed the blood of the noble martyrs in the valleys of the Alps; and with the last monarchs of the Stuart line and their wretched accomplices, who persecuted to the death the resolute defenders of civil and religious freedom. But will not God visit for these things? Nay, should we not rather say, Hath he not visited already? The visitation of Haman we shall soon have before us. Deeply has France already paid for the innocent blood which her rulers shed long ago, and her soil, it is to be feared, is not yet cleansed from the pollution. Other persecutors have had their award also. And the great central persecuting power, Rome herself, will in due time have her foretold destiny fully accomplished. As she hath done it will be done to her. Even if the word of God were silent on the subject, we could not but anticipate that that anti-Christian power, to whose direct influence may be traced persecution and bloodshed such as heathenism never was stained with, will have the measure meted to her which she has meted out to others. But we need not speak doubtfully here. The Divine word has fixed the doom of Papal Rome. And if she seems to be raising herself in our day, it is assuredly only to give the greater impulse to her final ruin, that she may fall from the greater height, when, like the great millstone cast by the angel into the sea, she shall be engulfed in the abyss of the wrath of God.—*Davidson.*

That believers obey not the laws of the king has always been the chief complaint among the anti-Christian rabble, of which Haman furnishes a copy. The children of God, in their eyes, must ever be insurrectionists, disturbers of the peace, persons subject to no law or order, and by whom the public weal is endangered.—*Berlenburg Bible.*

Satan, as Christ says, is a liar and a murderer. Hence he is ever busy in persecuting the Church with his lying and murderous designs. You have heard before his lie: The people are using new laws and ceremonies, and they despise the edicts of the king. Now hear his murderous words: If it please thee, decree that this people be destroyed. —*Brenz.*

A man resigned to the will of God will disregard the laws of man whenever these stand opposed to the will and laws of God, however much he may suffer thereby. When men disobey the laws of man and violate them, it is very soon taken notice of; but if they violate the law of God, then no one seems to observe the fact. We should not make man our idol, nor make flesh our arm. Immoderate ambition generally breaks out into cruelty. The anger of great men is fierce; hence one should have a care not to arouse the same against one's self.—*Starke.*

When wicked men cannot otherwise persecute the righteous, then his religion and laws must furnish them with a cause and a covering for their evil intentions. In important matters it is not good to render a hasty judgment, it is better to reflect. God permits the wicked to have success beyond their own expectation at times, but afterward destruction will come all the more unexpectedly.—*Starke.*

The sorrowful condition of the Jews becomes very apparent and plain as here revealed; likewise the just judgment of God is here fulfilled. He says, They would not obey God in their own land,

where they enjoyed such great freedom; but now they groan under the severe service that presses upon them, and they are brought into the risk of life itself. They refused to assemble in the sanctuaries of Jerusalem under their own kings; they ran after the golden calves, the sacred groves, and idols, and superstitions of the heathen. Now they are placed and scattered under the most tyrannical form of government. They neither can nor dare congregate to offer a service of praise to God.—*Feuardent.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 12—14.

FRUITLESS PREPARATIONS.

Haman had no regard to the contingency of human affairs. He was blind to the fact that it is not in man's power to control events, and arrange for the future. He had not learnt the wise man's lesson—"Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." To-morrow is a humiliating term often to those who have far-reaching designs. To-morrow never comes when we work under the guidance of human arrogance. It never comes exactly as we purposed. The seed may flourish to-morrow, but the sower has perished; or the seed which he has sown flourishes to his destruction. Enjoy thyself, Haman, to-day, call forth thy scribes, send forth thy bloody edicts, for to-morrow is coming with crushing doom! We all need to look into the future in order to read the lesson of our weakness.

I. **Here is unseemly haste.** No sooner had Haman received the king's permission than he goes forth to his work of revenge. He is in a hurry to set in operation the plans which should work to the destruction of the despised race. There would have been propriety in Haman pausing and considering well before sending forth the orders which were intended to work such vast mischief. Better still if Haman had said, "This scheme is an unworthy one. I am compromising my dignity and my manhood. I will go back to the king, and undo the evil I have sought to accomplish." Better think twice before committing ourselves to an unworthy action.

II. **Here are inconsistent precursory measures.** The bad are always inconsistent. Their lives are not harmonious. Wickedness renders a man inconsistent. The good in man, or at least the voice of conscience, works against or speaks against the evil. There would be times when Haman would feel the dreadful nature of the enterprise upon which he had set his heart. Revenge impelled to action, but conscience still spoke in reproving tones. We have pictured Haman as the revengeful man, being willing to wait in order that there might be the more signal display of his malicious power; but here we find him proceeding in regular method, as if to justify his deeds. It may be, however, that Haman was afraid of his own position If we have given him credit for too much conscientiousness, we cannot easily charge him with too much selfishness. All must be done according to law, that Haman's enemies may not in the future have the power of charging him with open-handed crime. Obedience to the eternal law of right is the only method by which human lives can be rendered consistent and harmonious.

III. **Here is a low estimate of human life.** This is one of the strange anomalies, that great men, as the world accounts greatness, think so little of human life. Is ambition to be fed?—human lives must be slaughtered. Is revenge to have its way?—human lives must be sacrificed. Kings, conquerors, and statesmen have regarded no life as precious which stood in the way of their ambitious schemes. Haman was bad, but there are more Hamans than we think of in the historical records. The low estimate of life is here shown—(*a*) In the *unmethodical nature of the slaughter designed.* The three terms—to destroy, to

kill, and to cause to perish—may be employed to give intensity to the barbarous decree. But they also set forth the dreadful fact that the poor people were to be killed anyhow. Let the servants of revenge do their work after any fashion, so that it is done effectually, and the hated race are removed from the face of the earth. (*b*) In the *indiscriminate nature of the slaughter designed.* "All Jews, both young and old, little children and women." Revenge would glut itself. The young and the fair, the beautiful and the innocent, the wise and the virtuous, must be slain. These bleating lambs, what have they done that the light of life must be quenched in its very dawn? (*c*) In the *rapacity after property.* The spoil of the slaughtered is to be taken for a prey. Life *versus* property. This decree is one of the unwritten decrees of modern civilization. Let the spoil of the slaughtered be taken for a prey. Men and women, fair maids, and even little children are slaughtered in order to increase property.

IV. Here is wickedness bolstered up by human authority. "The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day." Wickedness wears a mask; it shrinks from the exposure of its own deformity. State policy requires the enormous sacrifice. Capital must have its due return. Business is business. The law of supply and demand must have its way, though that may be through human blood. These are some of the flimsy and false excuses with which sin dresses up itself in order to make a respectable appearance.

Great men should try to get a true idea of the importance of life. Such an idea might save them from mad and wicked enterprises. God has crowned life with an excellent glory. To preserve life nature yields her million products, and pours into the lap of man her myriad fruits;—to promote its welfare the sun bathes the world with his influences, and the component parts of the atmosphere are blended together in relative proportions;—and to increase its pleasures the flowers give forth their fragrance and show their beauty, hills and mountains rise in grandeur, sweet dales rest in their encircling embrace; the birds make the air vocal with their songs of praise; and the stars gem the midnight sky, forming a glorious canopy for man. For the development of man's whole life time is not adequate, and eternity is the sphere in which an ever-expanding life shall work on to unknown heights of blessed perfection. Life is great, and high estimates ought to be formed of its worth. *Statesmen should remember that the true wealth of a community is its men.*

> "Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
> Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

All ought to remember that life is ignoble when passion is allowed to rule. How many lives are thus rendered inglorious! Lives with fair opportunities for development are blasted by an overmastering passion. Lives with extensive prospects for usefulness are crushed by the influence of ignoble motives. What a position was that to which Haman was raised! How many might have blessed his memory! His name might have been lauded by the national orators, and sung by the national poets. But his name is scouted, and his memory is covered with opprobrium. The name of the wicked shall rot. The memory of the just only is blessed. Let passion then be subordinated to principle. Let the ambition be to be good and to do good. Let the honour that cometh from God be the supreme concern. And then, whether men bow or refuse to bow, the soul will be unruffled.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 12—14.

The very circumstance which is urged as an objection to the truth of the narrative is rather to be regarded as an evidence of its trustworthiness. The Book of Esther does not contain any record of miraculous events. There are no wonders and prodigies in it, at which infidelity might carp, and with eference to which it might say that the writer must have drawn so largely upon his fancy in some places as to render suspicious what appears to be the record of simple matters of fact. The whole tenor and style of the book indicate that the writer of it acted the part of a historian who was concerned only to relate what actually took place; and if he had been a deceiver he certainly would not have laid himself open to an objection so very palpable as that under review, when it was in his power, by the mere alterations of dates, to make the whole narrative so plausible that not a flaw could be found in it. In a word, I consider the difficulty before us as an argument for the truth of the history. But further, it must be kept in mind that though the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the month to write the decree, it does not follow that the work was finished in a day. King Artaxerxes reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, as we read in the first chapter. Diverse languages and dialects were spoken in many of these provinces. The edict was, given forth, we are told, "to the rulers of every people of every province, according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language." The document had to be translated, then, into different languages, and a translation sent with the Persic original; and besides, there would, no doubt, be private communications dictated by Haman to the governors of the different provinces, containing directions as to the manner in which the bloody work was to be executed, and the spoils of the Jews disposed of; so that some considerable time would elapse before the royal decree could be sent out to the provinces. We learn, indeed, from the eighth chapter that it was the twentieth day of the third month before Mordecai obtained permission to counteract the design of Haman; and, making allowance for distance and modes of travelling, we may suppose that the sentence against the Jews had not even reached the more remote parts of the empire when the remission of it was resolved upon. But again, and more particularly, it is very obvious that we have to regard the whole transaction here as overruled in the providence of God for the good of his people and the confusion of their enemies. It is easy to say that there is an air of improbability in the whole story, because, even with a few months' warning, the Jews would have had time to remove from the places where they were doomed to perish. But whither could they have gone? is one question. The Persian empire was so extensive that it would have been difficult for them to escape beyond its bounds and find a refuge elsewhere. Besides, how could they have fled, when no doubt there were orders issued to prevent their flight? We know that in persecuting times in France, and in our own country also, while the victims of persecution were warned that within a certain period no mercy would be shown to them, there were steps taken to prevent their escape; and even the attempt to escape was denounced as criminal. In the case which we have before us in the text the whole matter turns upon this point — that Haman got what he considered the favourable day for his enterprise fixed by a superstitious practice which he revered and believed to be infallible. Then, after this, he felt as if all were secure; and with a recklessness—or, as we might call it, an infatuation—such as there are many examples of in the perpetrators of heinous crimes, he proceeds to accomplish his purpose in a way which one would say was calculated to render it abortive, and to ruin himself.—*Davidson.*

Multitudes may have been in such a state of bondage as to make it impossible

for any great number of them to escape; and as for others, it may have been expected and desired that some of them would leave the kingdom. But such as Mordecai, whom Haman especially wished to destroy, could not leave the kingdom, any more than Nehemiah, without permission from the king. It was also in keeping with Haman's character to cause all the anguish and horror possible to the Jews in anticipation of the dreadful slaughter. Then we must remember that a wise Providence so overruled this whole procedure as to bring to nought the plans of the Jews' enemy, and make his malignant hatred of the Jews the occasion of his ruin.—*Whedon's Commentary.*

If the chronicles of Persia thus record an intended massacre of the Jews which appals us in its extent and atrocity, the chronicles of Spain, Italy, and France contain records of massacres of Protestants which equal it in unmitigated barbarity. Let us thank God that our lot has been cast in times of comparative quiet, when the spirit of persecution and bloodshed is afraid to manifest itself; and when the exhortation of the apostle is not rendered hard by a "reign of terror"—"Fear God, honour the king."—*McEwan.*

"Where," one is ready to ask, "will rulers find persons willing to execute such unreasonable and barbarous orders?" Executioners have seldom been wanting. Many are accustomed to do blindly whatever their superiors require, without inquiring whether it be right or wrong. Others act under the influence of fear; while a thousand passions—selfishness, avarice, malice, envy, strife, hatred to godliness, and the innate love of cruelty — take the opportunity of gratifying themselves under the covert of authority, and the pretext of executing its mandates.—*McCrie.*

Ver. 13. The malice of Haman could no more frustrate the ancient oracles relating to the Jews than it could pull the sun out of the firmament, and deprive the world of the light of day. "The sceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh should come." The Shiloh was not yet come. Judah must, therefore, continue a distinct nation, under governors that proceeded from himself. Haman's malice will be so far from finding the means of extirpating Judah, that the glory of that people, though eclipsed, must again shine forth as the morning.

Ver. 14. Haman caused the edict against the Jews to be published in the language of every people, that they might all be prepared to bear their part in the destruction of the Jews. But the enemies of Israel had one thing in view, and the God of Israel quite another. Haman intended to make the destruction of Judah as sure as possible, but God intended to make all nations attentive witnesses of his power and wisdom displayed in counteracting the designs of their enemies, and accomplishing their salvation. The effect of such an edict would be the fixing of all men's attention on the event; and the event was to make it evident that there was no God like the God of Israel, nor any people on the earth so much the care of heaven as that nation which was held in abhorrence by Haman.—*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 15.

THE IRREGULARITIES OF HUMAN CONDITIONS.

Swiftly the grim messengers of intended death fly throughout the land. It is the proverbial and figurative statement that these posts flew faster than the cranes. We may picture the post-horses galloping from stage to stage. The post-masters took from the couriers the king's letters which proclaimed death and spoliation to all of Jewish nationality. And very soon throughout the land the sad story of this strange and murderous edict was known. It was known not only in the sorrow-darkened homes of the Jews, but also in the homes of those who were for the

present free from the fear caused by such a murderous design. And we may well suppose that there were perplexity and insecurity everywhere. The Jews were sadly troubled. The rest of the people were perplexed and insecure; for if there was no safety for these inoffensive Jews, if for them this wholesale and unrighteous slaughter, what security is there for any other portion of his Majesty's subjects? Yes, and there was perplexity in the breast of Haman, and in the heart of Ahasuerus the king. For evil doers are always evil thinkers. Those who purpose trouble for others will be troubled themselves. Haman and the king might sit down to drink, and try to drown and to forget their perplexity; but the dark shadow of wrong-doing would dog their steps, and render them uncomfortable. Happy is it for us that we live in such a country, and under such a wise government. It has its faults, but they are mere trifles when we consider the faults of Eastern despotism. Let us wisely use our privileges.

I. The inequalities of human conditions. The most striking instance of inequality is that which is illustrated between the condition of the *oppressor and the oppressed.* We do not believe in the Divine right of kings as advocated and upheld by some in the past, but there is a broad and true sense in which governments are Divine. Fear God. Honour the king. These are two injunctions binding upon men. Wise government tends to the consolidation of human society. It is for the general good that some should rule, and that others—the large majority—should be ruled. There is law in the material world. There are higher and lower in the intellectual world. There is law—the law of love—even in heaven. There must be law on earth. Where there is no law, where there is no rule, there is no liberty worthy of the name. But every blessing, every right and even Divine organization, is capable of being subverted. That which, rightly managed, is for the general good may be rendered productive of manifold evils. A true king should be the father of his people, and the type of God. A despot is the oppressor of the people, the slave-driver of the people, the robber of the people, the scourge of the race, and the type of the devil. A king may be an oppressor without being a hard-hearted monster. He may be weak, effeminate, given up to luxury, and influenced by others more cruel than himself. Such an oppressor was Ahasuerus. Haman was his evil genius. Haman was the vile master spirit in the palace plotting tremendous wrongs. Haman was the cruel serpent fascinating and deluding the weak-minded monarch, and spitting venom upon all the Jews. Here are the oppressors in Shushan the palace, dictating their murderous edicts, and yonder, scattered abroad and dispersed among the people, are the oppressed. Already we seem to hear the cries and to behold the fast-falling tears of such as are oppressed, and they appear to have no comforter. And on the side of the oppressors there is power. Power in Shushan the palace. Weakness among the scattered Jews. Royal despotism has well-nigh been swept away from the face of the earth, but still may we see, if we rightly use our eyes, this inequality of human conditions—the oppressors and the oppressed. The defeat of the South by the North in America has not abolished all slave-driving In this free and liberty-worshipping country there is still oppression. Oh, the tears of such as are oppressed! How fast they still fall. What an ocean they make! If these tears are kept in Divine bottles, how large and how many the bottles! If these bottled tears are to confront the oppressors, they may well pray for the rocks and mountains to fall upon and hide them from the consequences of their evil doings. Let us see to it that we do the things that are just and equal. The inequality of human conditions is further illustrated by the contrast *between the jollity of the palace and the perplexity of the city.* How beautifully simple and yet how suggestive the statement: "The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed." Revelry in the palace. Misery in the cottage. The wine of mirth, and jollity, and forgetfulness for the king. The wine of bitterness for his subjects. The music of pipers and harpists, of singing men and singing women, for the court. The sad, discordant

notes of wailing for a large portion of the population. The city Shushan was perplexed, and well it might be. *The indifference of one class of the community towards another and seemingly less-favoured class is brought to view in this passage.* Is a Persian state the only one where this state of things may be witnessed? Are heathen countries the only lands where we may behold this heartless indifference? No; even in Christian states class distinctions are far from being abolished. At this day, and in this country, there are revelry in high places, and want and wretchedness in low places. In this time of commercial depression, the well-to-do classes should ask, Are we only enjoying ourselves while many of our countrymen are in a state of distress? *This indifference has its root in and is the outcome of selfishness.* What did the king care for the misery of others so long as his own pleasures were not interrupted? It is a relief for us to suppose that the king was not all taken up with self. The after history shows that selfishness had not destroyed all traces of true feeling. But we find very few traces of good in poor Haman. Especially at this time, what did he care so long as revenge was glutted? All that he appeared to mind was his own personal aggrandizement. His revenge would revel in human blood. His avarice would gladly feed upon the spoil of the slaughtered. His ambition would gloat over this dreadful display of his power. Oh, this hateful selfishness! What beauty it spoils! What life it wastes! What goodness it destroys! It is an insatiate deity that requires holocausts to be offered at its shrine, and never cries, It is enough.

II. The mysteries of human conditions. The air is thick with mysteries. We move in a maze. We are lost in bewilderment. And this is one of the mysteries—the king and Haman are enjoying themselves, while there is perplexity in the city of Shushan. One man seems to pass his life in joy, and another in sorrow. Success appears to attend every step which is taken by one man, but defeat and disaster are the portion of another. He is ever struggling against adverse forces, and never appears able to come off conqueror in the contest. This is one of the mysteries that King David sought to know by intense thought. This, too, was a difficulty that beset the Psalmist—the existence of triumphant evil. It was that which vexed him, and he could not put it together. There are swindles that are sovereign, and sovereigns that are swindlers. Base men in the high places of the earth. Haman feasting with the king. Mordecai mourning at the king's gate. "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Did poor Mordecai feel envious? We cannot be hard upon him if he did. Were the thoughts of Mordecai turned in this direction? Did he, too, try to solve the mystery, and give it up as a hopeless task? Did it tend to deepen his grief and darken his hours of sorrow? And all men and women in suffering must have felt it more or less. The mystery is there; but why let it be a trouble? The mystery is there, but why not try to leave it and get into serener heights?

III. The compensating forces of human conditions. The law of compensation has more extensive ramifications than is dreamt of in the philosophy of narrow thinkers. If there be such a principle in the material world, why not in the moral world, since both are fashioned and governed by the same Author? We know not how far those are correct who tell us that happiness and misery are pretty equally distributed. This, however, is a very comfortable doctrine for those who have happiness enough themselves, and do not care to give themselves the trouble of looking after the welfare of the less fortunate. But there are compensations. The joys of the rich have their drawbacks. The sorrows of the poor are not without their alleviations. The pleasure of Ahasuerus was not a permanent stream. The glory of Haman was soon tarnished. The sorrow of Mordecai was turned into laughter. There may be hunger in the wilderness, but there is manna from heaven. There may be thirst, but there is water from the smitten rock. The waters of Marah may be bitter, but there is close by a God-given tree to sweeten.

In the journey there is a Marah, but there is further on an Elim, with its twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees.

IV. The sympathetic element in human conditions. The city Shushan was perplexed. The Jews, we may well imagine, had many sympathizers. Sorrow draws men and women more closely together than joy. It is easier to weep with those that weep than to rejoice with those that rejoice. Self-regarding considerations might cause the citizens of Shushan to be perplexed, and lead the well-disposed of the Persians to sympathize with the Jews. Perhaps even poor Ahasuerus was trying to get away from the working of a sympathetic nature as he sat down to drink. This is a compensating force when sorrow elicits sympathy. Seek to feel with and for others' woes. When one part of a city suffers, the whole of the city should be perplexed.

V. The harmonizing principle for human conditions. What principle is there that is to adjust in fit proportions the various parts and members of human society? What power must be brought to bear so that men and women may neither hurt nor destroy one another? Are communistic doctrines to be promulgated and received? Is there to be a great levelling process in society? Is Haman to be hanged on the gallows? Must Mordecai be made prime minister in his stead? Is Ahasuerus to be dethroned? Or is he to be made merely the mouthpiece and executor of a number of men who shall be supposed to be voted for by the nation in popular assemblies? Something may be done by wise methods of government. Something may be done by placing noble-minded men in high offices of the state. Something may be done by the rich being rich in good works, and being ready to distribute, and by the poor being frugal, contented, and industrious. But the only effective harmonizing principle is the gospel rightly understood, broadly interpreted, and fully received. That gospel which dethrones selfishness, and teaches the true brotherhood of humanity. That gospel which teaches to fear God, to honour the king, and all men to love one another. That gospel which preaches peace to all, both to those that are far off as well as to those that are near.

VI. The true sustaining power for all human conditions. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Let the "perplexed" of every city and of every nation endure as seeing him who is invisible. The true help in life's difficulties is to go into the sanctuary of God. Wherever there is a believing soul, there God makes a little sanctuary of glorious manifestations. By faith and prayer Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews were saved and delivered out of their perplexities. By faith and prayer the world's true heroes have ever conquered. And by the same means must men and women still prevail. Here learn—(*a*) *To keep away from sensuality, which hardens the nature.* Haman would keep the king drinking, so that he might be kept callous and indifferent. Strong drink blunts the fine edge of reason, darkens the understanding, and hardens the nature. (*b*) *To cultivate sympathy, which ennobles the nature.* Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. The law of Christ is the law of love. The fulfilment of that law is man's noblest work. The greatness of Jesus is the greatness of his loving sympathy. (*c*) *To foster firm faith in an over-ruling power, which brightens life.* Not faith in the overthrow of the Hamans of time, not faith in the theory that kings will see their folly, but faith in the power of One who is all-wise and all-good. (*d*) *To have respect unto the harmonies of heaven amid the discords of earth.* We may not live to see the day when the perplexity of Shushan will be turned into gladness, but every true soul will be ushered into and enjoy the harmonies of that city where the inhabitants are never perplexed.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 15.

It is a woeful thing to see great ones quaff the tears of the oppressed, and to hear them make music of shrieks.—*Bishop Hall.*

A prince and an officer who, at the time when the inhabitants of their chief city are in the greatest consternation, when above all an entire people is thrown into mortal fear of their life, can sit down to eat and drink, manifest either an inhumanity which would easily arouse a general revolt, or an evil conscience which already foretells the failure of their plans.—*Lange.*

So to drown the noise of conscience, and so to nourish their hearts as in a day of slaughter. Thus Joseph's brethren, when they had cast him into the pit, sat down to eat bread, when it had been fitter for them to have wept for their wickedness. So did the Israelites, when they had made them a golden calf. Herod feasteth when he had cast the Baptist into prison. The anti-Christian rout revel and riot when they had slain the two witnesses. The Pope proclaimed a jubilee upon the Parisian massacre. The King of France said that he never smelled anything more sweet than the admiral's carcase, when it stank with long lying. Better is the perplexity of him that suffereth evil than the jollity of him that doeth evil.—*Trapp.*

It is an absurd and impious thing to indulge ourselves in mirth and pleasure when the Church is in distress and the public are perplexed.—*Matthew Henry.*

The cruel measure could not but fill all peace-loving citizens with horror and anxiety.—*Keil.*

Haman gives up himself to pleasure and jollity, in which he had the honour to be companion to the king. He will soon find that the end of this mirth is heaviness. The city Shushan was perplexed when the king and Haman were enjoying this merriment. What heart could be free from perplexity on such an occasion? The Jews were known to be as innocent as their neighbours. Many of them resided in the city of Shushan. The prospect of their miserable and unmerited fate was terrible. Who could tell where such mischiefs were to end? Haman might next day petition his deluded master to compliment him with a like sacrifice of other lives. The people of Shushan at this time would be in much the same state of mind as a Persian minister of state in later times, who said that he never left the king's presence without putting his hand to his head, that he might feel whether it was still standing on his shoulders.—*Lawson.*

But what must the Jews scattered throughout the provinces of the empire have thought of this strange decree? They were not in the secret of the plot. They knew nothing of Haman's injured pride, and Mordecai's religious opposition to the king's commandment. They would regard it purely as an event in the providence of God. And how inexplicably mysterious must it have seemed to them! In their exile they had been faithful to his word, keeping themselves from the sins of surrounding heathenism, and so preserving themselves in his fear that even Haman the Agagite had nothing of which to accuse them save respect to the laws of their God. Wherefore, then, had he permitted this tremendous calamity to overshadow them? Might they not have doubted his providence? Certainly, as the Jews were at this time circumstanced, their faith in God was put to a severe test, and we may readily conclude that the ordeal through which they were now passing would either find them better or worse—more or less trustful in him who maketh the wrath of men to praise him. The common experience of God's people bears witness to similar mysterious overshadowings. They cannot account for them. When they were most devoted to his service, and most anxiously seeking his favour; when they were most strenuously battling against the world, and endeavouring to bring honour to his name; when they were expecting his blessing, and looking for good from his sovereign hand, it has often been even

then that there have come events which it was natural to interpret as signs of his displeasure, tokens of his wrath. But we are wrong interpreters of his providence beforehand, and even afterwards. The sufferer cannot understand his long illness, nor the prosperous man his sudden fall into poverty and reproach, nor the parent the anguish of repeated strokes of bereavement, nor the widow the wisdom and benevolence of her desolation and loneliness. All is dark and mysterious to them, and they may be sorely tempted to discredit the mercifulness of the Divine purpose in Providence. Of such ordeals, too, we can confidently affirm that after having passed through them they will either leave us better or worse. From the history of God's afflictive dealings in the past we may clearly gather one grand lesson—never to doubt his word, and always to have faith in his love. Job, Jacob, Daniel, David, and the Jews in Persia all teach us this lesson. At such times it is most glorifying to him, as well as comforting to ourselves, to trust in him explicitly and fully.—*McEwan.*

Self-indulgence renders men callous to the distresses and sufferings of their fellow-men. "The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed." Give the votary of sensuality or intemperance the opportunity of gratifying his craving, and he cares not what misery he may occasion to those in whose well-being he is bound to take the deepest interest. Let the sensualist have his will, and it costs him not a thought that he may be destroying the happiness of families, and ruining for time and eternity the victims of his ungodly lust. Strong carnal appetite, when it is excited, sets at defiance the law of nature as well as the law of God. One can scarcely think without shuddering of the conduct of the two men referred to in the text. They had resolved to shed innocent blood without measure; but they could sit down as boon companions to enjoy themselves over their wine, and could contrive to drown any remonstrances of conscience with the flowing goblet. Could there be a more thorough personification of evil in one of its most revolting forms than we have here? And yet, my friends, it finds its counterpart, although on a smaller scale, in the procedure of multitudes who live under the light of the gospel! Is that individual one whit better than the infamous pair referred to in the text who, forgetting the claims of home, and his responsibilities as a father and a husband, spends his earnings in debauchery, and thus reduces what might be a happy family to wretchedness and poverty? While he is enjoying himself with his companions, all reckless of his obligation to protect and provide for his wife and children, they are sitting in absolute want, with no prospect for the morrow but what is still more gloomy than the experience of to-day. Then, if there are any here to whom these remarks are in any respects applicable, let them bethink themselves of their sin and folly; let them judge themselves by the same rule whereby they would judge the king and Haman. Then they will acknowledge that they have been unfaithful to a sacred trust committed to them, and they will endeavour by the help of the grace of God to be no longer the destroyers, but the protectors of those whom they have solemnly vowed to protect. And let me conclude my remarks upon this part of the subject by again saying, that the excessive indulgence of any forbidden appetite makes men selfish, and regardless of the rights of others. So that, as the followers of Christ, we should all strive to keep the desires of our animal natures in subjection, else we forfeit all claim to belong to him with whom the will of his heavenly Father was paramount in everything.—*Davidson.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. *Look to the end.* Thus oft empty vessels swim aloft; rotten posts are gilt with adulterate gold; the worst weeds spring up bravest; and when the twins strive in Rebekah's womb, profane Esau comes forth first, and hath the primogeniture. But whiles they seek the greatest dignities, they mostly meet with the greatest shame; like apes, while they be climbing they the more show their deformities. They are lifted up also that they may come down again with the greater poise. It was, therefore, well and wisely spoken by Alvarez de Luna, when he told them who admired his fortune and favour with the King of Castile, You do wrong to commend the building before it be finished, and until you see how it will stand. Princes' favourites should consider with themselves that honour is but a blast, a *magnum nihil*, a glorious fancy, a rattle to still men's ambition; and that as the passenger looketh no longer upon the dial than the sun shineth upon it, so it is here.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 1. *The sympathetic traveller.* Here is something that happened on a railway train somewhere in New England last summer. A woman clad in deep mourning entered the cars at a railway station. She took a seat just in front of an inquisitive-looking, sharp-faced female. The woman in black had not been seated long before she felt a slight tap on the shoulder, and heard her neighbour ask, in a low, sympathetic tone, "Lost anybody?" A silent nod was the response. A slight pause, and then a second question: "Child?" A low shake of the head in the negative. "Parent?" A similar reply. "Husband?" This time the slight nod again. "Life insured?" A nod. "Experienced religion?" A nod. Then: "Well, well, cheer up! Life insured and experienced religion; you're all right, and so's he!" Haman's life was not insured, as the sequel of the history shows. He did not experience the saving power of religion, and therefore a small matter disturbs his happiness. Mordecai's life was insured in the best sense. No weapon formed against the Lord's anointed can prosper until the Lord's time. Those are safely kept who are kept by God.

Ver. 2. *Good principles.* A young man was in a position where his employers required him to make a false statement, by which several hundred pounds would come into their hands which did not belong to them. All depended upon this clerk's serving their purpose. To their great vexation, he utterly refused to do so. He could not be induced to sell his conscience for any one's favour. As the result, he was discharged from the place. Not long after, he applied for a vacant situation, and the gentleman, being pleased with his address, asked him for any good reference he might have. The young man felt that his character was unsullied, and so fearlessly referred him to his last employer. "I have just been dismissed from his employ, and you can inquire of him about me." It was a new fashion of getting a young man's recommendation; but the gentleman called on the firm, and found that he was "too conscientious about trifles." The gentleman had not been troubled by too conscientious employées, and preferred that those intrusted with his money should have a fine sense of truth and honesty, so he engaged the young man, who rose fast in favour, and became at length a partner. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Even unscrupulous men know the worth of good principles that cannot be moved. The Emperor Constantius, father to Constantine the Great, once commanded all his Christian servants to offer sacrifices to the gods of Rome. If they refused to obey his command they were to be dismissed from his service. Many of them obeyed; others did not, and accordingly were dismissed. But in a day or two he turned out all those who complied with his orders, and recalled all those whom he had expelled, saying that those would be most faithful to their prince who were most faithful to their God, and that he would not trust men who were false to their religion. Mordecai was conscientious about trifles, and true to his religion. This he was whether he found favour with man or not. He looked for the favour of God. This must be the inspiring motive, for conscientious men do not always succeed, as the world reckons success. The advice of Mr. Carter—a Puritan preacher—to one of his congregation, "You must work hard, and fare hard, and pray hard," was good; but we cannot feel sure about his conclusion—"And then you will be sure to thrive." In these modern times we have certainly known some who have worked hard, and fared hard, and prayed hard all their lives, and at their death have not been able to bequeath a shilling.

Ver. 7. *Lot casting.* The old interpreter addeth *in urnam*, into the pitcher. And the new annotations tell us that, about casting lots, there was a pitcher into which papers, with names of the several months written on them, and rolled up, were cast; yea, also papers with the name of every day and of every month were cast in; then one, blindfolded, put in his hand, and pulled out a paper, and according to the marks which they had set down, such a month proved lucky, and such a day in the month; and, by God's providence, it so fell out that their supposed lucky day was on the twelfth month, whereby it came to pass that their plot was defeated before the time of accomplishing thereof.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 7. *Deciding by lot.* In nearly all cases where reason cannot decide, or where the right of several claimants to one article has to be settled, recourse is had to the lot, which "causeth contentions to cease." In the East a young man is either so accomplished, or so rich, or so respectable, that many fathers aspire to the honour of calling him son-in-law. Their daughters are said to be beautiful, wealthy, and of a good family; what is he to do? The name of each young lady is written on a separate piece of clah, and then all are mixed together. The y(uth and his friends then go to the front of the temple; and

being seated, a person who is passing by at the time is called, and requested to take one of the pieces of olah, on which a lady's name is inscribed, and place it near the anxious candidate. This being done, it is opened, and she whose name is written there becomes his wife.—*Oriental Illustrations.*

Ver. 7. *The leech and surgeon.* When a surgeon puts a leech upon a patient, his intention is to heal; the leech follows the instincts of its nature, and the two work together to produce the desired result. When Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, their intention was to humiliate him and to be rid of him; but it was made to serve God's intention, which was to exalt him. So Haman planned for the destruction of the Jewish people, and delayed his purpose; but it was God's purpose to save. Haman's delay hastened the purpose of God. Should we not rather say that God made use of Haman's delay to bring about his gracious purpose of deliverance to Israel and destruction to their enemies?

Ver. 5. *Trouble in every house.* Talmage says, "I passed down a street of a city with a merchant. He knew all the finest houses on the street. He said, There is something the matter in all these houses. In that one it is conjugal infelicity. In that one, a dissipated son. In that, a dissolute father. In that, an idiot child. In that, the prospect of bankruptcy." In Haman's house there was trouble. Mordecai troubled Haman. The good must ever be troublers to the wicked.

Ver. 5. *Revenge.* The Highland chief lay a-dying in his mountain home, and in his dying heart were hard revengeful thoughts towards an opposing clan. A minister waited at his bedside, and exhorted him to forgive, assuring him of the fact that God will not forgive if we do not. And, said the chief, I will forgive them; but in almost the same breath he said to his son, that he left him a father's curse if he forgave them. Louis XII. said that nothing smells so sweet as the dead body of an enemy. The Christian's code is one of forgiveness—that nothing smells so sweet as the rescued body of an enemy. Well would it have been for Haman—well both temporally and spiritually—had he really forgiven the supposed slight of Mordecai.

Ver. 8. *The laws of the Jews.* Prosper's conceit was, that they were called Judæi because they received their laws from God. And, therefore, if Demosthenes could say of laws in general that they were the invention of Almighty God; and if Cicero could say of the laws of the twelve tables in Rome that they far exceeded and excelled all the libraries of all the philosophers, how much more true was all this of the laws of the Jews, given by God, and ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, Moses! Seneca, though he jeered the Jews for their weekly Sabbath as those that lost the seventh part of their time, yet he could not but say that, being the basest people, they had the best laws, and gave laws unto all the world. Those holy Levites acknowledge, with all thankfulness, that God had given them right judgments, true laws, good statutes and commandments, whereby he severed them from all other people, as his own peculiar; and this was their glory wherever they came, though the sycophant Haman turneth their glory into shame, as one that loveth vanity, and sought after leasing.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 9. *Rage.* Rage is essentially vulgar, and never vulgarer than when it proceeds from mortified pride, disappointed ambition, or thwarted wilfulness. A baffled despot is the vulgarest of dirty wretches, no matter whether he be the despot of a nation vindicating its rights, or of a donkey sinking under its load.—*Hartley Coleridge.*

Ver. 9. *Wrath cured.* A valiant knight, named Hildebrand, had been injured and offended by another knight, named Bruno. Anger burned in his heart, and he could hardly wait for the day to take bloody revenge on his enemy. He passed a sleepless night, and at dawn of day he girded on his sword, and sallied forth to meet his antagonist. But as it was early he entered a chapel by the wayside, and sat down and looked on the pictures which were on the walls, lit up by the rays of the morning sun. There were three pictures. The first represented our Saviour in a purple robe of scorn before Pilate and Herod, and bore the inscription, "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." The second picture showed the scourging of Jesus, and under it was written—"Who threatened not, when he suffered." And the third was the crucifixion, with these words—"Father, forgive them." When the knight had seen these words he knelt down and prayed. Then the light of evening was more lovely to the returning knight than the light of morning had been.

Ver. 9. *The negro and his enemy.* A slave who had by the force of his sterling worth risen high in the confidence of his master, saw one day, trembling in the slave-market, a negro, whose grey head and bent form showed him to be in the last weakness of old age. He implored his master to purchase him. He expressed his surprise, but gave his consent. The old man was bought and conveyed to the estate. When there, he who had pleaded for him took him to his own cabin, placed him on his own bed, fed him at his own board, gave him water from his own cup; when he shivered, he carried him into the sunshine; when he drooped in the heat, bore him safely to the shade. What is the meaning of all this? asked a witness. Is he your father? No. Is he your brother? No. Is he your friend? No. He is mine enemy. Years ago he stole me from my native village, and sold me for a slave; and the good Lord has said, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." When put to the test of practice it will be found that very few Christians believe in inspiration. Where is the professed follower of Christ in these days who would think of following the negro's simple acceptance of an inspired injunction.

Ver. 9. *The man who killed his neighbours.* The Americans have a tract on this subject. It contains, in the form of a narrative, many useful practical suggestions on the art of overcoming evil with good. It is with kindness—modest, thoughtful, generous, persevering, unwearied

kindness—that the benevolent countryman kills his churlish neighbour; and it is only the old evil man that he kills, leaving the new man to lead a very different life in the same village after the dross has been purged away. If any one desires to try this work, he must bring to it at least these two qualifications—modesty and patience. If he proceed ostentatiously, with an air of superiority, and a consciousness of his own virtue, he will never make one step of progress. But even though the successive acts of kindness should be genuine, the operator must lay his account with a tedious process and many disappointments. Many instances of good rendered for evil may seem to have been thrown away, and no symptom of penitence appear in the countenance or conduct of the evil-doer; but be not weary in this well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Although your enemy has resisted your deeds of kindness even unto seventy times seven, it does not follow that all or that any one of these has been lost.—*Arnot.*

Ver. 9. *Clive and his moderation.* When our great Eastern conqueror, Clive, was accused in Parliament of having amassed too much during the period of his conquests, he boldly said, "Why, when I think of that treasure, and see the hills of gold and silver here, and the jewels there, I declare I am astonished at my own moderation." Haman offered a large sum of money to Ahasuerus—a large sum, whether the 10,000 talents be reckoned according to the Mosaic shekel, £3,750,000, or according to the civil shekel, £1,875,000. But the wealth of the prime minister of that vast country must have been great. Doubtless the Jews then, as now, would be a people given to the accumulation of wealth and property, and he would see that he would be no loser by the bargain. He would confiscate the property of the slaughtered Jews, and thus enrich himself by the transaction. It seemed an opportunity most favourable for wreaking his revenge and enriching himself and the state. Haman's large offer is *moderation* itself when we think of all the consequences of his proposal. The destruction of a whole people, much trouble in the kingdom, and the confiscation of vast wealth.

Ver. 13. *The deliverance of Hubert de Burgo.* We read in our Chronicles, that when King Henry III. had given commandment for the apprehending of Hubert de Burgo, earl of Kent, he fled into a church in Essex. They to whom the business was committed, finding him upon his knees before the high altar, with the sacrament in one hand, and a cross in the other, carried him away, nevertheless, unto the Tower of London. The bishop, taking this to be a great violence and wrong to the Church, would never leave the king until he had caused the earl to be carried back to the place whence he was fetched. This was done; and although order was taken he should not escape thence, yet it gave the king's wrath a time to cool, and himself leisure to make proof of his innocency; by reason whereof he was afterwards restored to the king's favour, and former places of honour. And the like befell these Jews ere the thirteenth of Adar, but Haman, blinded with pride and superstition, could not foresee it.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 13. *Soldiers, not butchers.* At the famous Bartholomew's massacre, when the King of France sent his orders to the commanders in the different provinces to massacre the Huguenots, one of them returned him this answer: "In my district your Majesty has many brave soldiers, but no butchers." That virtuous governor never felt any effects of the royal resentment. It is to be feared that few of the Persian governors would have given such proofs of virtuous courage if the king's edict had not been reversed. We find none of all the governors of the provinces of the Babylonian empire that refused to bow their knees to the graven image which Nebuchadnezzar the king set up. The subjects of princes who rule with unlimited dominion are for the most part slaves both in body and in soul. They are taught from their earliest days, by the examples which they see around them, to consider their princes as gods on earth, whose will must not be disputed. —*Lawson.*

Ver. 14. *Executioners.* There is abundance of evidence that, in the middle ages, the office of public executioner was esteemed highly honourable all over Germany. It still is, in such parts of that country as retain the old custom of execution by stroke of sword, very far from being held discreditable to the extent to which we carry our feelings on the subject, and which exposed the magistrates of a Scotch town,—I rather think no less a one than Glasgow,—to a good deal of ridicule, when they advertised, some few years ago, on the occasion of the death of their hangman, that "none but persons of respectable character" need apply for the vacant situation. At this day, in China, in Persia, and probably in other Oriental kingdoms, the Chief Executioner is one of the great officers of state, and is as proud of the emblem of his fatal duty as any European Lord Chamberlain of his golden key. —*Notes to Anne of Geierstein.*

No doubt very many of the subjects of Ahasuerus would be willing to become executioners, in order to secure the favour of the monarch, and to get a share of the spoil. They would get themselves ready against that day of intended slaughter.

Ver. 15. *A love of books and want.* In one of our large manufacturing centres a working man, with a love of books, had managed with great economy to collect together so many as 150 volumes; and all these had to be sold to meet the necessities of nature. One volume was highly valued. When he did not want the money he could have sold the book for a sovereign, but when starvation came the precious treasure had to be sold for one shilling. That one book tells a sad tale of suffering to those who can catch its silent message. In contrast, we may read of the eleventh edition of a modern book published at thirty shillings. And what is even this to the large sums spent in splendidly bound and illustrated copies of poets and artists? And what is even this when we hear of a lady of high rank selling a marriage present—consisting of a mag-

nificent tiara of diamonds, which cost £13,000—in order to defray the cost of sinful extravagance, while many of our countrymen are in starvation? "The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed." We are thankful for the displays of liberality in our country; but still too many in this land sit down to drink while a vast multitude are perplexed.

Ver. 15. *The surgical operation.* In one of our London hospitals a poor man was about to undergo a surgical operation. The anæsthetic was administered, but while it rendered him insensible to pain, it did not lessen his power of hearing and observing. Around him were assembled a number of young medical men. One half were opposed to the operation, and said, The man will die in our hands; but the other said, What a stroke of business it will be if the operation is successfully performed; it will make our fortunes! Selfishness ruled; the operation was performed. The poor man heard the pleading of selfishness, and said, It ought not to have been done; I shall never get better; and in a few days he expired. It is most likely the disease would have killed him, but is that any excuse for this stroke of selfish policy? We give all praise to the members of the medical profession, but we must not ignore its defects. But oh, this selfishness is common to all. What waste of precious life has selfishness incurred! Haman is not the only one who drinks at the expense of the suffering of others.

Ver. 15. *The prosperity of the wicked.* Would it not be accounted folly in a man that is heir to many thousands per annum that he should envy a stage-player clothed in the habit of a king, and yet not heir to one foot of land? who, though he have the form, respect, and apparel of a king or nobleman, yet is at the same time a very beggar, and worth nothing. Thus wicked men, though they are arrayed gorgeously, and fare deliciously, wanting nothing, and having more than heart can wish, yet they are but only possessors; the godly Christian is the heir. What good doth all their prosperity do them? It doth but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The labouring ox is longer lived than the ox that is put into the pasture—the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter; and when God puts wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honour and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil-doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked; for the candle of the wicked shall be put out into everlasting darkness, they shall soon be cut off, and wither as a green herb.—*Spencer.*

Parable of the hog and the horse. "After these events." What events? After God had created the remedy before the infliction of the wound; after Mordecai had saved the king's life before the orders for the destruction of his people were promulgated. After these events the king advanced Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to an illustrious position in the kingdom. He was raised, however, but to be destroyed. His destiny was like to that of the hog in the parable of the horse, the colt, and the hog. A certain man possessed a horse, a colt, and a hog. For the two former he measured out daily a certain amount of food—so much was their allowance, no more, no less; the hog, however, was allowed to eat according to his own pleasure. Said the colt to the horse, "How is this? Is it just? We work for our food, while the hog is a useless animal; surely we should have as much to eat as is given to him." "Wait," answered the horse, "and you will soon see, in the downfall of the hog, the reason." With the coming of the autumn the hog was killed. "See," said the horse, "they did not give the hog so much to eat for his own benefit, but in order to fatten him for the killing."—*Talmud.*

Ver. 15. *Different disposal of blessings.* When a prince bids his servants carry such a man down into the cellar, and let him drink of the beer and wine, this is a kindness from so great a personage to be valued highly; but for the prince to set him at his own table, and let him drink of his own wine, this, no doubt, is far more. Thus it is that God gives unto some men great estates, abundance of corn, and wine, and oil; yet, in so doing, he entertains them but in the common cellar. But for his people they have his right-hand blessings; he bestows his graces on them, beautifies them with holiness, makes them to drink of the rivers of his pleasures, and means to set them by him at his own table with himself in heavenly glory.—*Spencer.*

Ver. 15. *Ulysses and the Syrens.* We may read that Ulysses, when he was to pass the coast of the Syrens, caused his men to stop their ears, that they might not be enchanted by their music to destroy themselves; but for himself he would only be bound to the mast, that though he should hear, yet their musical sounds might not be so strong as to allure him to overthrow himself by leaping into the sea. Thus there are some of God's people that are weak in faith, so that when they see God's outward proceedings of providence seemingly contrary to his promises, they are apt to be charmed from their own steadfastness. It were therefore good for them to stop their ears, and to shut their eyes to the works, and look altogether to the word of God. But for those that are strong, in whom the pulse of faith beats more vigorously, they may look upon the outward proceedings of God; yet let them be sure to bind themselves fast to the mast—the word of God—lest when they see the seeming contrariety of his proceedings to the promise, they be charmed from their own steadfastness, to the wounding of their own most precious souls, and weakening the assurance of their eternal salvation.—*Spencer.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL NOTES.] **1. Perceived all that was done]** Evident that Mordecai knew not only the terms of the public proclamation, but the particulars of the private arrangement between Haman and the king. For in ver. 7 it is said, "And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them." **Put on sackcloth with ashes]** An abbreviated combination, meaning that he put on a hairy garment and spread ashes upon his head in sign of deep grief. To rend one's clothes in grief was as much a Persian as a Jewish practice. When tidings of Xerxes' defeat at Salamis reached Shushan, all the people "rent their garments and uttered unbounded shouts and lamentations."—*Herod.* viii. 99. זעקה an intensified form of expression, similar to the Latin *conquestus*, violent complaint, earnest and vociferous demonstration. **2.]** The king's gate was the free place before the entrance to the royal palace. Further he could not go, for it was not permitted to bear the semblance of an evil omen before the king. **3.]** The sorrow was general. All the Jews broke out into mourning, weeping, and lamentation, while many manifested their grief in the manner described. **4, 5.]** The matter was made known to Esther by her maids and eunuchs; and she fell into convulsive grief. The verb here used is a passive intensive—to be affected with grief as one seized with the pains of delivery. She sent clothes to her guardian, that he might put them on, doubtless, that thereby he might again stand in the gate of the king, and so relate to her the cause of his grief. But he refused them, not only because he would wear no other than garments of mourning, but because he desired a private opportunity to communicate with her. Mordecai accomplished his object, and Hatach the eunuch was sent to him to obtain particulars.—*Lange.* **What it was, and why it was]** lit. what this, and why this? She had not been informed of this terrible decree. **6. The street of the city]** The broad open place before the palace.—*Whedon's Commentary.* **7. The sum of the money]** Rather a statement of the silver. The word here rendered *sum* means a distinct or accurate statement. Mordecai told Hatach what had befallen him, and gave him also a statement of the silver Haman had promised to bring into the king's treasury. "This promise of Haman is here emphatically mentioned as the chief point not so much for the purpose of raising the indignation of Esther to the highest pitch (*Bertheau*), as to show the resentment and eagerness with which Haman had urged the extermination of the Jews."—*Keil.* **8. The copy of the writing of the decree]** may very probably refer to the contents of the writing of the decree; possibly Mordecai had noted down the substance of that decree. **To make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people]** To entreat, supplicate for something diligently. She should petition relief for her people. "A perilous undertaking to urge upon her. But Mordecai's faith already began to discern a Divine reason for her elevation in the kingdom at that time (see ver. 14).—*Whedon's Commentary.* **11. The inner court]** The court that faced the principal audience hall—the throne chamber—where alone it would be practicable for Esther to see the king on such business. In the time of Deioceses the Mede, approach to the king was already very difficult; and among the Persians, with very few exceptions, no one was permitted to approach the king without a notice. As to the golden sceptre, Rawlinson observes—"A modern critic asks, 'Is it likely that a Persian king would always have a golden sceptre by him to stretch out towards intruders on his privacy?' It seems enough to reply that in all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis, there is not one in which the monarch does not hold a long tapering staff (which is probably the sceptre of Esther) in his right hand." Esther's difficulty arose from the fact that she had not been called to come in unto the king for thirty days. She did not feel quite sure of her position. To venture unsummoned might be to prejudice the cause. **13.]** Mordecai does not reproach Esther with being indifferent to the fate of her fellow-countrymen, but rather calls her attention to the fact that her own life is in danger. **14.]** Who knows, if thou hadst not attained to royalty at or for such a time? may be taken as the translation of the latter part of this verse. The other place may refer to another agent of God in contrast with Esther; but thus it refers ultimately to Divine interposition. And although neither God nor God's assurances are here mentioned, still, as is justly remarked by Brenz, "We have this noble and clearly heroic faith of Mordecai, which sees the future deliverance, even amidst the most immediate and imminent danger." **15, 16.]** Esther resolves to go to the king unsummoned and begs a three days' fast. "Though God and prayer are not here mentioned, it is yet obviously assumed that it was before God that the Jews were to humble themselves, to seek his help, and to induce him to grant it."—*Bertheau.* **The three days, night and day]** are not to be reckoned as three times twenty-four hours, but to be understood of a fast which lasts till the third day after that on which it begins; for, according to ver. 1, Esther goes to the king on the third day. The last words, **If I perish, I perish, &c.]** are the expression not of despair, but of resignation, or perfect submission to the providence of God. **17. And Mordecai went his way]** *i. e.* from the place before the court of the king, to do what the queen had commanded him to do.—*Keil.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1—4.

GREAT SORROW.

A TRAGIC interest attaches to the man who is the subject of great sorrow. We are drawn towards him by the power of sympathy. He is lifted out of the common herd, and his individuality becomes at once more apparent and more prominent. Job is one of those characters that stand out most conspicuously in ancient story. His name is the most frequently mentioned, and the most widely known. Job is a very byword, and is as familiar in our mouths as household words, yea, it is a household word itself. And why is this? It is, we presume, not merely on account of his great patience under suffering, but on account of those varied and dark sorrows through which he passed. The patriarch Jacob is to us more luminous, more human, more fragrant, and more attractive, when tempest-tossed by trouble, when crushed by sorrow, than when luxuriating in the land of Goshen. The centre point of interest in the history of Abraham is when he is called upon to offer up his son Isaac. David is never sublimer than when in the intensity of his anguish he mourns the slaughter of his wayward son Absalom. And Mordecai is to us grander and more endearing when clothed in his hairy garment and with ashes on his head, indicative of his grief, than when he was arrayed in royal apparel, and the crown royal was placed on his head, and he rode forth on the king's own horse. Mordecai's loud and bitter cry of sorrow touches humanity more deeply than the proclamation of Haman, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." But if such interest attaches to the individual in sorrow, what shall be said of a nation in mourning? A whole nation weeping and wailing. Throughout that vast empire, in all its towns and villages, might be seen Jews clothed with sackcloth and sitting in ashes. National joy is attractive, but national sorrow has a more solemn interest. Sublimely and solemnly grand is the aspect of Nineveh mourning and fasting, as one man, for its sins. But these poor Jews were weeping and wailing on account of a threatened slaughter which was undeserved. Let us come near to the man and the nation thus under the dark shadow of threatened evil.

I. Sorrow cannot be prevented. Sibbes says, "None ever hath been so good or so great as could raise themselves so high as to be above the reach of troubles." And Watson observes in the same strain, "The present state of life is subject to afflictions, as a seaman's life is subject to storms. 'Man is born to trouble;' he is heir-apparent to it; he comes into the world with a cry, and goes out with a groan." This paragraph is a forcible illustration of these truths. Goodness is personified in Mordecai. Goodness combined with greatness are personified in Esther the queen. Earthly greatness is personified in the king. He was so great that the emblems of sorrow are not permitted to come nearer than the king's gate. And there were varying degrees of goodness and of greatness among the Jewish people, and yet all were subject to sorrow. The very goodness of Mordecai was the cause of his trouble. The tender, gentle goodness of Esther the queen was the reason why she was "intensely grieved." The king's gate might be closed against the entrance of those wearing the garb of sorrow. But sorrow itself can overleap the loftiest barriers, and find a way through the strongest bulwarks. Sorrow darkens the cottage and the palace. The merry laugh and prattle of childhood in sweet country homes are hushed in the presence of this great on-coming calamity. Lovers forget their new-found joy as they think of the national trouble. The harps are hung on the willows, and the children of Zion weep as they feel that the hands of the persecutors are strong. Mordecai's loud and bitter cry is heard in the palace,

and mingles itself with the music of pipers and harpists. The bright and cheery countenance of Esther wears an unwonted gloom.

II. Sorrow cannot be explained. Of course we may give the explanation that sin is the cause of sorrow in its general and broad aspect. But when we come to particularize we find ourselves at fault. Easy it is for us now to see the mistakes made by Job's friends in trying to account for his great troubles; but if Job's friends had kept silent and lived till the present time they would most likely be found to be as wise as their critics. It is not so very difficult to be wise after the event. But sorrows even after they have passed and have done their blessed work cannot always be explained. Eternity is the only true and complete interpreter of time. Heavenly joys only can make plain the meaning of earthly sorrows. Why should Mordecai suffer? What is the purpose of his present distress? Why should intense grief shake and toss the fair nature of the virtuous Esther? Why should many hearts be troubled that are the shrines of truth, of beauty, and of goodness? In the light of history and of God's providential dealings we may now offer an explanation; but while the facts of history are being enacted, while God's providential dealings are in operation, the troubled hearts are sorely perplexed. Mordecai's cry was the cry of grief, but was it not also the cry of baffled endeavour to understand the mystery? Our particular sorrows cannot at present receive definite explanation. The seed can only be properly explained by the harvest. The seed of our present sorrows can only be properly explained by the consequent harvest of eternal joys.

III. Sorrow cannot be hidden. It does not appear that Mordecai strove to hide his sorrow. Some assert that he gave vent to his sorrow in order to attract notice, and to get an audience with Esther. Difficult to say how far this suggestion is correct. Certainly Mordecai's patriotism and goodness would lead him to feel deeply the present position of his people. He could not help the manifestation of his grief. Stoics might say, Keep your sorrows to yourself; do not parade your griefs; do not be ever showing the bleeding sores of your wounded heart. But poor Mordecai could not carry out the stony lessons of these stern teachers. Emotion is as much a part of our God-given nature as intellect. The man who does not feel is a man with the better part of manhood destroyed. And feeling must sooner or later find an expression. These people were demonstrative. The English are not demonstrative. They are said to take their very pleasures sadly. They are comparatively silent about their sorrows. But it can even be found out when an Englishman is in trouble. The cry of wounded hearts may be silent, but it is penetrating. The fragrance of crushed spirits is pungent and powerful. It is better not to hide our sorrows. Trouble concealed is trouble increased. Sorrow caged up and confined is the breeder of much mischief. If earth closes her kingly gates against the cry of our sorrows, heaven opens wide its pearly gates, and as soon as ever the cry passes inside those gates it is changed into laughter.

IV. Sorrow cannot be confined. It passes from nature to nature. It travels from home to home. Even when men and women are not personally affected by that which is the cause of the sorrow yet they feel its influence, and are sad. Go into the house where death has entered, see all the family in tears, and your nature is at once softened and subdued. It was natural to expect that all the Jews should be affected with sorrow for a common calamity threatened. But the maids and the eunuchs participated in the grief. And Esther, though ignorant of the reason for the sorrow, was intensely grieved. This community of feeling, this wonderful susceptibility to sorrow, speaks to us of our brotherhood. We are members one of another.

V. But sorrow can be mitigated. It may not be in our power to remove sorrow, but it may be so mitigated as not to crush and destroy. It may be mitigated, yea, removed—(*a*) By believing *that the threatened trouble may never come.* The trouble which Mordecai and these Jews feared never came. They had good

reason for fear and for sorrow. Many of our fears are without foundation. Many of the troubles we fear may never come. Why weep over ideal troubles? Let us keep our tears till the sorrow is present. Do not let us go out to meet the enemy in our present weakness. (*b*) By believing *that God knows how to effect a deliverance.* Mordecai's trouble was not the mere fancy of a disordered brain. The trouble was there. The edict had gone forth. The death-warrant was signed and sealed. To all human appearance Mordecai was as much a doomed man as the criminal fettered in his cell and waiting the hour of his execution. But God worked out for him and all the Jews a wonderful deliverance. Mordecai's God still reigns, and can still work for the deliverance of the oppressed. (*c*) By believing *that sorrow may be rendered productive.* In this case the sorrow was the means of *bringing about deliverance.* The sorrow of Mordecai and of these Jews was one of the methods employed by God to work out the deliverance of his chosen people. Your sorrows may work out your deliverance. The sorrows of an Egyptian bondage may lead you to desire and to attain to the joys of the promised land. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Salvation here mentioned is the highest and most complete deliverance. Sorrow may be the means of *bringing about enlargement.* Not enlargement merely in the sense of respiration, as the word is employed in this chapter as a translation of Mordecai's declaration, but enlargement in the sense of *development.* Sorrow is a great developing agency when rightly received, and when blessed by the Holy Spirit of God. Mordecai's sorrow developed his nature, enlarged his sympathies, and increased his power of vision. Sorrow sometimes makes people selfish. They nurse their sorrows like mothers fondle their sickly babies. They think of nothing but of themselves and their troubles. This, however, is not the proper effect, is not the designed purpose of sorrow. It should open up the whole nature. It should expand all the powers, both intellectual and moral, of a man's being. As the waters of the Nile overflow the surrounding country, and open up the soil, and prepare it for the reception of the rice seed; so the waters of our sorrows should overflow and open up the otherwise barren soil of our natures, and prepare it for the reception of the seed of all truth in its manifold bearings. Let sorrow do its perfect work of developing. Sorrow seems to say in mournful measures to all its children, "Be ye also enlarged." It touches to finer and broader issues. It should bring out the latent powers and forces of suffering humanity. It should develop into strength and Christlike nobility and manliness. The developing power of sorrow is brought out by the apostle when he tells us that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." See to it that such is the blessed fruit of sorrow's operation. Sorrow should be productive in another sense. It should *intensify the appreciative faculty*, and set our souls longing for the pure realms where sorrows will be all unknown because they will be no longer required. Hunger is the best sauce. The sorrows of time prepare us to receive the joys of heaven. When there is intense thirst there can be nothing more refreshing than a drink of clear, sparkling spring water. The sorrows of our pilgrimage intensify the soul's thirst for the consolations of the gospel and of God's promises, and for the abiding comforts of the celestial home. The hart pants for the water-brooks. The poor soul hunted and harried by the fierce dogs of trouble pants for the earthly sanctuary, and much more for the heavenly sanctuary. Mordecai in his trouble looked to Esther, and looked still higher, for he expected enlargement and deliverance from another place. We may look to earth. We must make use of all legitimate earthly means. But we must look for true enlargement and deliverance from another place. What place is that but the throne of God, the mercy-seat, the Father's house. In that house sorrow will be turned into joy, weeping into laughter, crying into songs of gladness, and pain into perpetual and unsullied pleasure.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1—4.

2. *For none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.*—Behold, they that wear softs are in kings' houses, and those that are altogether set upon the merry pin. Jannes and Jambres, those jugglers, are gracious with Pharaoh, when Moses and Aaron are frowned upon. Baal's prophets are fed at Jezebel's table, when Elias is almost pined in the desert. The dancing damsel trippeth on the toe, and triumpheth in Herod's hall, when the rough-coated Baptist lieth in cold irons; and Christ's company there is neither cared for nor called for, unless it be to show tricks and do miracles for a pastime. The kings and courtiers of Persia must see no sad sight, lest their mirth should be marred, and themselves surprised with heaviness and horror. But if mourners might not be suffered to come to court, why did those proud princes so sty up themselves, and not appear abroad for the relief of the poor oppressed.—*Trapp.*

In the case of Mordecai, the first effect of the proclamation was bitter anguish, for his conduct had been the flint out of which the spark leaped to kindle this portentous conflagration. Not for a moment would we doubt the rightness of that conduct, for his way had been hedged in by the providence of God on the one side, and the precept of God on the other; but this, while it eased his conscience, would only drive the sword deeper into his heart. He "rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; and came even before the king's gate." But Mordecai's grief did not upset his judgment. The genuine sorrow of an honest soul very seldom has that effect; and this man's greatness comes out in his deliberateness. To see him rushing out into the streets and up to the palace gate clothed in sackcloth, and filling the air with shrieks and groans, you might fancy that his reason had been thrown off its balance; but Mordecai knew very well where he was running to, and how far he must make his cry reach. It soon appeared that he had made a copy of the edict and brought it with him, that he had informed himself as to the details of the blood-money, and that he had thought out and fixed in his own mind what must be done. Faith too, as well as sound judgment, may be discerned under this good man's grief. Certainly the cloud was very black, but he had found out a thinner place, if not a rift, in it. "In the way of obeying God I have exposed my people to this fearful peril; but, on the other hand, God has these four years and more established my foster child next to the throne. Putting these two things together, I am surely not wrong in judging that they point to the place where the cloud will yet part and greater light come through it." It was precisely the latent force of piety that gave Mordecai courage enough to set aside every thought of his own safety, to make the most public exhibition of his grief, to go straight towards the supreme earthly power. No doubt he had already gone to the supreme power in heaven; but those who have done that are not found folding their hands in the time of trouble. Moses erred when he said to the people, "Stand still," in front of the Red Sea: God told him that up to even such a barrier and through it his people must march. "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Mordecai had learned this lesson, and now taught it to Esther.—*A. M. Symington.*

And weeping and wailing.—This was the way to get in with God, though they might not come crying to the court. Oh, the Divine rhetoric and omnipotent efficacy of penitent tears! Weeping hath a voice. Christ turned to the weeping women when going to his cross and comforted them. He showed great respects to Mary Magdalene, that weeping vine; she had the first sight of the revived phœnix (though so bleared that she could scarce discern him), and held him fast by those

feet which she had once washed with her tears, and wherewith he had lately trod upon the lion and adder.—*Trapp.*

In sad thoughts did Mordecai spend his heart, while he walked mournfully in sackcloth before that gate wherein he was wont to sit; now his habit bars his approach; no sackcloth might come within the court. Lo! that which is welcomest in the court of heaven is here excluded from the presence of this earthly royalty: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Bishop Hall.*

It is well remarked by Henry, in his commentary upon this passage, that "although nothing but what was gay and pleasant must appear at court, and everything that was melancholy must be banished thence, yet it was vain thus to keep out the badges of sorrow unless they could withal have kept out the causes of sorrow, and to forbid sackcloth to enter unless they could have forbidden sickness and trouble and death to enter." We are reminded by these words of the well-known saying of John Knox to the ladies of Queen Mary's court, when he had been dismissed from her presence with marks of high displeasure, and was waiting to hear the result of his interview with her: "O, fair ladies, how pleasing were this life of yours if it should ever abide, and then in the end that we may pass to heaven with all this gay gear. But fie upon that knave, death, that will come whether we will or not." But it is not to those only who dwell in palaces that our application of the text may be made. People in exalted stations among ourselves, people who might be expected to act more rationally than heathen potentates and nobles were accustomed to do, often exhibit the same desire to have removed out of their sight everything that would remind them of their frailty and mortality, as if in this way they could put trouble and mortality away from them. But this is unavailing. The unwelcome heralds of death, in the varied forms of disease, will find their way into the mansions of the great as well as into the humble dwellings of the poor; and at length the enemy himself will appear all unceremoniously to drag away from their luxuries and their selfish enjoyments those who have no portion but in the present life. What I would say here then is, would it not be the best course for all to have their minds directed towards the reality which must overtake them whether they will or not; and to avail themselves of the means which God has provided in the gospel to strip death of its terrors?—*Davidson.*

Could Mordecai have been permitted to redeem his countrymen from the avenging sword, he would have rejoiced in "offering himself upon the sacrifice of their faith," and have gone to the scaffold, or the furnace, or the lions' den, clothed in white, with garlands bound round his temples, and with the song of triumph in his mouth. But he knew that his enemy would have refused this as a "kindness and a precious oil," which, instead of breaking his head, would have refreshed and exhilarated his wounded spirit. His grief was that not only he, but his people were sold "to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." But, besides, Mordecai had to reflect that he had been instrumental in bringing this calamity upon his people by refusing the honours claimed by Haman. This could not fail to give him pain, and to aggravate the evil which he deplored. Not that he repented of what he had done, for we find him afterwards persisting in the same line of conduct, and refusing to propitiate the haughty favourite by giving him the marks of reverence. We may innocently, or in the discharge of what we owe to God, do what may be the means of injuring both ourselves and others whom we love. It does not follow from this that we ought to have acted otherwise. But still it is a painful reflection. And it was a great addition to the affliction of Mordecai that the Jews were to be sacrificed in consequence of his having incurred the hatred of a wicked but powerful individual. This also accounts for his grief being more poignant than that of Esther.—*McCrie.*

Poor Mordecai had it not in his power to confine his anguish to his own bosom, or to his own house. He published it

through all the city of Shushan. You need not ask for what reasons persons overwhelmed with grief do not inquire what purpose the publication of their grief may serve. The strong impulse of sorrow often makes them publish their complaints to the winds or the trees. Yet who knows what good end it might serve to announce the unmerited calamity of the Jews through the whole city of Shushan. There might be some compassionate hearts amongst the people that would be interested by such a dire calamity; and though the people had no direct access to the king, yet they could present their supplications to the counsellors who saw his face; or if nothing could be gained, nothing could be lost by men already doomed to death. —*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 4.

THE ACTION OF SYMPATHY REJECTED.

Change of place is not necessarily change of state. Wherever we travel we remain essentially the same. We cannot lose our identity. Foreign travel, change of scene, alteration of position, may do much to benefit the man or the woman both physically, intellectually, and morally. But these changes cannot radically change the nature. The benefit is often only temporary, and we soon relapse into our old condition. Esther the orphan had her troubles, but she did not become superior to trouble when she became Esther the queen. The royal Esther had troubles which were not possible to the uncrowned Esther. Let us seek, not to be free from trouble by change of place, or by alteration of outward condition, but to be fortified in the inward condition so that we may bear trouble in Christlike fashion.

I. Bad news. "So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her." Bad news travels fast and far. Esther was soon told of Mordecai's great trouble. The bearers of evil tidings cannot be welcome messengers. Some gladly carry evil tidings through the promptings of a depraved nature. Such ought not to be received. Their mouths ought to be shut by tokens of disapproval. The listeners to evil stories are almost as much to blame as the tellers. In this case, however, we have no just reason to suppose that there was any evil design; yea, we may rather and legitimately suppose a good purpose. Esther's maids must have known of the relationship that existed between her and Mordecai; and we may well imagine that they carried the evil tidings to see if anything could be done to alleviate Mordecai's distress. Let us be slow to be the bearers of bad news. See to it that our information is correct. Examine our purpose in telling the dismal tale. And then, when we see that the tale must be told, pray for grace and wisdom that it may be told in the best possible manner.

II. Consequent grief. "Then was the queen exceedingly grieved." The poet tells us, "And he who meditates on others' woes shall in that meditation lose his own." He may lose his own, but he gets fresh trouble by entering sympathetically into the woes of the other. We can only bear another's burdens of trouble by becoming troubled ourselves. How can we weep with those that weep unless we share their sorrows? To attend to the troubles of others is both to lessen and to increase our own troubles. Shall we then shut our ears to the cries of sorrow? No; for the consideration of the troubles of others may reconcile us to the pains of our own condition. There is to the true heart a sweet luxury in tasting the bitter cup of other people's sorrows. And benevolence, not inordinate self-love, should be the rule of life. The outward and the inward are closely and marvellously connected. Place together the words "told it her," "exceedingly grieved." The words of the maids acted powerfully on Esther's sensitive and loving nature. So it was with Job. After the messengers had told him of the slaughter of his cattle, his servants, and his children, then he rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon

the ground, and worshipped. Esther, however, did not know that Mordecai's calamity was her own, and yet she was exceedingly grieved. Oh, these words! One is ready to say, Would that I had not been endowed with the power of speech! These words carry untold joy on their wings. What treasures they embody! But oh, what sorrows they produce! A word may change a destiny. Guilty or not guilty may mean life or death. These maids were no eloquent orators. They told a simple tale, and the queen was exceedingly grieved. They might well recoil from the effects of their own speech. It was not the style of the composition, but the subject matter of the discourse that produced the effect. Let preachers and speakers look to the matter as well as the manner. There was preparedness on the part of Esther. She loved Mordecai, and so was exceedingly grieved when the maids told her the story. Preparedness on the part of the hearer tends to make the speaker eloquent and successful. A Demosthenes could not have made Haman feel for Mordecai's great trouble. A simple maid can send Esther into paroxysms of convulsive grief.

III. The resulting sympathetic action. "She sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him." Royalty weeps; that is interesting and commendable. Royalty weeps on hearing the account of the sorrows of one of the subjects; that is still more commendable. Royalty bends itself to try and remove the trouble, and that is most commendable. A queen should be the mother of her people. Esther was a motherly queen, and sought by gentle nursing to remove the pains of the sick and troubled Mordecai. *Sympathy should be practical.* Tears are good, but tears that do not flow to water and nourish noble purposes, and practical efforts for the good of others, will be like the streams that flow to deaden life, and to produce miserable petrifactions. These maids were successful preachers. The bearers went forth to do good. Many preachers preach for years and not one Esther is found to go forth and remove the sackcloth from the Mordecais. Practicalness is the want of the age. A little more of wise utilitarianism is needed in the present day. Preachers to tell the story simply of the world's troubles; Esthers to hear the story sympathetically, and then not to go home to their play, their luxuries, and their pleasures, but to visit the Mordecais, and if this be not possible, to send goodly raiment to those clothed in sackcloth. *Sympathy should be guided by wise discretion.* Esther did not understand all the case, and she committed an error. But while we condemn, let us remember that she did what she could. And even mistaken workers will not lose their reward if the work is done from a right motive. A new raiment cannot remove sorrow. The tailor cannot minister to a mind diseased. The dressmaker cannot root out the deep-seated sorrow of the brain, that is, not as a mere dressmaker. Harm may then be done by acting according to mere sympathetic impulses. In benevolent enterprises there must be the exercise of the judgment. A new raiment may be a disastrous gift as well as useless. And the receiver of the gift may not be as wise as Mordecai. The latter rejected the offer, but the former may clutch at the present to his own damage.

IV. The strange but wise rejection. "But he received it not." There are circumstances under which gifts may be wisely refused, and this was one of those occasions. Strange at first sight that Mordecai should refuse Esther's loving offer of help If he felt that sorrow was better than laughter, he might have taken the raiment of joy to show his grateful appreciation of Esther's consideration. What an ungrateful and unseemly course of conduct! would Haman have exclaimed had he heard of the case. Just like that surly dog Mordecai, who would not bow to me as I passed. But Mordecai had a wise reason for his course. He had a purpose in view. The true cause of his sorrow must be made known to Esther. He was grateful to Esther, but he must still be stern in order to bring her up to the point of self-sacrifice and heroic daring. Self-interest and the feeling of affection must not be allowed to stand in the way of duty. We have seen that Mordecai loved Esther, but we now see that he would forego her love and even treat her

rudely at the call of patriotism. Love of kindred must be subordinated to the love of duty.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 4.

The perpetual intelligences that were closely held betwixt Esther and Mordecai could not suffer his public sorrows to be long concealed from her. The news of his sackcloth afflicts her ere she can suspect the cause; her crown doth but clog her head while she hears of his ashes. True friendship transforms us into the condition of those we love; and, if we cannot raise them to our cheerfulness, draws us down to their dejection. Fain would she uncase her foster father of these mournful weeds, and change his sackcloth for tissue; that yet, at least, his clothes might not hinder his access to her presence for the free opening of his griefs. It is but a slight sorrow that abides to take in outward comforts; Mordecai refuses that kind offer, and would have Esther see that his affliction was such as that he might well resolve to put off his sackcloth and his skin at once; that he must mourn to death, rather than see her face to live.—*Bishop Hall.*

Ignorant as yet of the evil that was purposed against her nation, and supposing that it was some private sorrow that pressed upon the spirit of her friend, Esther sent a change of raiment to him, thus expressing her desire that, whatever the cause of his trouble was, she was anxious that he should be comforted. This was one of the ways in which, in those times and countries, sympathy and affection were manifested. And so we learn that when the prodigal returned, the father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." And it is in allusion to the same custom that the Saviour says, "The Lord hath sent me to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is a very pleasing trait in the character of Esther, that her advancement, and the grandeur and luxury of the palace, had not made her forget the friend of her childhood. His grief touched her heart, and she would have him know this. But his sorrow was too deeply-seated to be assuaged even by her kindness. Mordecai refused the raiment which she sent, and persisted in wearing his sackcloth. The rejection of such a present would have been accounted highly offensive in ordinary circumstances, but it only made Esther apprehend that Mordecai's trouble must be of no usual kind.—*Davidson.*

Esther, in her elevation, and in separation from her friends, was far from forgetting them. She was deeply afflicted when she heard of the mourning habit and sore affliction of Mordecai. She was vexed that he should appear at the king's gate in a dress in which he could not enter it, and therefore sent to him a change of raiment. But she knew not the sources of his distress. Grief so firmly rooted and so well founded could not be removed without a removal of its cause. To send him change of raiment was like singing songs to a heavy heart. Mordecai was doubtless pleased with her kind attention; but she must do something of a very different nature to banish his sorrows.—*Lawson.*

The character of Esther is greatly enhanced in our view from this little incidental circumstance. It shows that her feelings had not been blunted by her exaltation and the influences of the court life of Shushan; that she was not self-contained, but had an admirable tenderness and consideration for others, and that she was willing to relieve their burdens by becoming herself a sharer in and a mutual bearer of them. Never does woman appear more noble, and we might almost say resplendent in moral beauty, than when becoming a true "Sister of Mercy" to our fallen humanity. The New Testament Scriptures sparkle and glitter with such characters as this. Mary anointing the feet of Jesus with pure spikenard of

great price, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, as if she could not find a token sufficiently tender of her respect and love. Martha actively engaged in benefitting a beloved brother, and unweariedly serving in every-day life the Saviour whom she adored. Dorcas "full of good works and almsdeeds," seeking to help the poor and comfort the widows at Joppa, and leaving behind a blank when she died, the greatness of which was evinced by the tears of a bereaved multitude. Phœbe, the deaconess of Cenchrea, a "succourer of many." Priscilla, the true helpmate of her devoted husband in the work of the Lord. Lydia, and Joanna, and Susanna, and Syntyche, and Salome, and Tryphena, and Tryphosa, and many others, whose names are in the book of life. The ministry of woman may be silent and noiseless as the light which shines into the chamber in the morning without breaking the repose of the sleeper; but as the light, too, it is mighty in diffusing around cheerfulness and blessing. And never does she appear more laudably than in the homes of the suffering, like the angel who strengthened our Lord in his agony. So do we honour Esther the more because of this side-light thrown on her character. Though it was only a sorrowful kinsman wailing at the gate, yet was there on this account one queenly heart in the palace which was "exceedingly grieved."—*McEwan.*

So Esther's maids came and told it her.—She herself (say interpreters) was kept in a closer place than they, not having the liberty of going abroad, as others had, because the Persians that were of highest quality used so to keep in their wives; and if they went forth at any time, they were carried in a close chariot, so as that none could see them.

Then was the queen exceedingly grieved.—Dolens exhorruit. So Tremellius. The Hebrew is, she grieved herself, *scil.*, for Mordecai's heaviness; as our Saviour, when he heard of the death of his friend Lazarus, groaned in spirit and troubled himself. And here we see that of Plautus disproved—No woman can grieve heartily for anything. Holy Esther is here sick at heart of grief, as the word importeth; and yet (as one saith of the Lady Jane Grey) she made grief itself amiable—her night-clothes becoming her as well as her day-dressings, by reason of her gracious deportment.

And she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai.—That he might be fit to come unto her, and make known the cause of his grief, for she yet knew nothing of the public calamity. And although she was so highly advanced above Mordecai, yet she condoleth with him, and honoureth him as much as ever. This was true friendship. *Ego aliter amare non didici*, said Basil to one that disliked him for stooping so low to an old friend.

But he received it not.—Such was the greatness of his grief which he could not dissemble, such was his care of the community, that he could not mind his own private concernments while it went ill with the public. Such also was his patient continuance in well-doing, that he would not give over asking of God till he had received, seeking till he had found, knocking till the gate of grace was open. His clothes were good enough, unless his condition were more comfortable.—*Trapp.*

Temporal fortunes and successes are never so great as not to be subject to sorrow, terror, and fear. God permits his Church to be plunged into sorrow at times; he leads her even into hell; but he also takes her out again. Though the Lord elevate us to high honours, we should never be ashamed of our poor relatives, but rather relieve their needs. We should never reject proper and suitable means to escape a danger, but promptly use them.—*Starke.*

At first the lazy (*i. e.* Jews) do not snore. For the Holy Spirit exhorts us in all adversities to confide in the Lord; he does not exhort us to be indolent, indifferent, and sleepy. For our confidence in the Lord is a powerful and efficacious means of stimulating in his service all strength and limbs. Further, the Jews, though in the greatest peril, do not utter virulent words against the king, nor do they fly to arms. Mordecai and the other Jews rend their garments, put on sackcloth, strew ashes

upon their heads, wail, weep, and fast. These manifestations signify not that the Jews in Persia were turbulent, but that they take refuge in God; since help could not be discovered upon earth, they seek it from heaven. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." By this example we too are taught, that when afflictions are sent upon us we should reflect that God sets before us the fat oxen and calves which we may offer to him. In this may we offer to God in our prayers the afflictions which we sustain, and call upon the name of the Lord that he may help us. Behold, however, the reverse of this order of things. The palaces of princes are Divinely instituted to be the places of refuge for the miserable. On the contrary, in the palaces of Persia nothing is regarded as more odious and abominable than men with the signs of affliction. Heaven is ever open to the cries of mourners, and God is never unapproachable to those calling on his name by faith.—*Brenz.*

Vers. 1, 6. 1. Mordecai rends his clothing, and puts on sackcloth and ashes. He enters the city thus, and raises a great and bitter lamentation. So also the Church of God, in its development as regards the history of humanity, should again and ever anew put on the habiliments of mourning. "The world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful." The then existing nation of Jews could not manifest its loyalty to law without coming into conflict with heathendom. Nor can the Church bring to development its inherent spiritual powers without challenging all the Hamans and their opposition in the world. Even this present period is an instance in proof. Following upon the great progress of the things of the kingdom of God since the time of wars for freedom, we must naturally expect reactions, such as have been manifest in the sphere of science and other relations. Indeed, we must constantly look for increasing opposition on the part of the world. But when the Church shall have fully developed the gifts of grace granted to it, then conflict and sorrow will have reached its highest point at the end of the days. The real cause of sorrow on the part of the true members of God's Church will not be, as was the case with Mordecai, their own distress, but that of the world. It will consist in the fact that the world is still devoid of the blessed society of the true God; that the kingdom of God is still rejected and even persecuted. What joy it would give if, instead of enmity, recognition and submission, and, instead of disdain, a participation in the gifts and grace of our Lord, were to become the universal experience.

2. The more difficult the position of the Church as in contrast with the world, the more favourable is her position for bringing to view her glory. Her glory is that of her Head. If in the Old Testament times, and in the "dispersion" itself, there existed a Mordecai, who for love of his people manifested his firmness and strength in the hour of tribulation; and if there was found an Esther, who, when called upon, willingly came forward to bring about the salvation of her countrymen; how much more in New Testament times and in the modern Church will there arise individuals who, in following the Lord, especially in evil days, will manifest a watchful care for others and a self-sacrificing spirit for them; who will show forth patience and meekness as well as energy, fidelity, and tenacity, a spirit of giving and an ability to make sacrifices; and withal will carry in their hearts joy and peace as the seal of their kinship with God. All these graces may be so many illuminating rays of the glorious life of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who more and more attains in them a full stature. May all seize the special opportunity, recognize the particular duty, and know when to perform it, which the times of distress of the Church place in the hand, of showing forth the power that dwells in them by their life and work!

3. Mordecai took an especially great part in the universal grief that overcame the Jews when the edict of their annihilation was issued and promulgated. It was not his personal danger that alarmed

him, but, as may be expected of such a faithful follower of Judaism, it was the calamity threatening the whole Jewish people. While, however, thought and feeling were centred upon the event, he was free from despair. With him it was a settled conviction that the people of God, as a whole, could not be destroyed, and that deliverance must come from some source. Instead of giving way to despondency, he turned his distress into a power that urged him to still greater endeavours. There was no more a fear of appearing as a Jew, nor did he hesitate because his loud lamentations would attract general attention, and thereby expose him to the derision and disdain of many. However reluctant he might have been to expose his beloved Esther, whose welfare had ever been a matter of great concern to him, to extreme danger, still he persisted with the greatest determination that she should run the whole risk, and only rested when she gave her assent. It is barely possible that he attributed some blame to himself because of his firmness against Haman, or thought that on that account he more than any other was under obligation to remove the threatened danger. The sole moving impulse was doubtless his love for his people. But this should not be less in any member of the Church. It should rather, in proportion as there are more members in the body of Christ, be stronger than it was in him. Would that no one among us were behind him as regards energy, self-denial, and a willingness to make sacrifice! There are doubtless many who are able to endure all this in their own person. But—if no lighter consideration—the thought that their relatives, yea, even wife and children, may suffer on account of their confession bows them down. Would, if necessary, that we too may stand equal to Mordecai in willingness to surrender our dearest kin!

4. Mordecai manifests a remarkable tenacity as opposed to Esther. He keeps his position at the gate of the king until she sends him not only her maids with garments, but also Hatach to transmit his message. He departs not thence until she has resolved to stand before Ahasuerus as a Jew pleading for the Jews. Under other circumstances he might have been thought to be tiresome by his persistency and demands; but his relation to her now justified it. When he had been accustomed to inquire concerning her health and well-being, to give her counsel, to care for her, he had shown no less persistency; and his demand that now she should reveal her Jewish descent, and as such should venture all, was equally in keeping with his character. So long as no danger threatened he counselled her to keep silence respecting her Jewish parentage; but now he had himself taken the lead in an open confession of the fact. Although it had before been difficult for him to approach Esther as the queen, or request any favour at her hand now he hesitated no longer to implore her help, not so much for himself, as for the whole people. There was no motive for him to be selfish, or to conduct himself in a heartless or severe manner towards her. Hence there was no question but that his undertaking would succeed, that Esther would be willing to comply with his request. It is eminently desirable that those who, like him, must move and induce others to make sacrifices of self and possessions in the service of the kingdom of God, should stand on a level with him in this respect.—*Lange.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 5, 6.

A MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT.

"Hatach, one of the eunuchs in the court of Ahasuerus, in immediate attendance on Esther." This is the short and simple biography of Hatach given in the secular chronicles, and the account given in the sacred chronicle is not much longer. However, the best men have not the longest biographies. Indeed, it may be safely

asserted that some of earth's noblest sons have not had their virtues either recorded by the historian or celebrated by the poet. Modest goodness blooms in the shade, and passes away without a grand funeral oration. Not the merely useful, but the brilliant life is that which commands attention and receives applause. Hatach's life does not seem to have been of the brilliant character. His position precluded the possibility of startling adventure. He moved along in a quiet sphere; but he is commended now as being a pleasing contrast to the character given of other eunuchs. Fryer and Chardin describe the eunuchs as being the base and ready tools of licentiousness, as tyrannical in humour, and pertinacious in the authority which they exercise; as eluded and ridiculed by those whom it is their office to guard. Hatach evidently did not take a mean advantage arising from his position. Instead of being tyrannical in humour, and pertinacious in authority, he appears to have been amenable to the authority of Esther, and to have done her bidding most readily. It may be that Hatach felt the salutary influence of Esther's loveliness and Esther's virtuous nature. As she exercised a wise influence over her maids, so she may have exercised a similar influence over Hatach. A good life is not without its influential power. A good woman's influence is especially radiating and subduing and elevating. This eunuch must have received moral as well as material advantages from this ministerial appointment. In serving Ahasuerus he served one of the mightiest of earthly kings at that period; but in serving Esther he was waiting upon one who was the servant of the King of all worlds. God can so order it that the servants of kings shall be the servants of his chosen; so that earthly kings become indirectly, and sometimes directly, the servants of heaven's royal children. Earthly ambition is to minister to the royalties of earth; but the noblest ambition is to minister to the royalties of heaven. This ministry is satisfactory, and is sure to meet with its appropriate reward. And if Hatach served with a view to this higher ministry, he may claim a distant kinship with that other eunuch, who served Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and who said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Why may not Esther have her converted eunuch as well as Philip? Heaven is larger than we think. Time is peopling eternity. Heaven's children may come from heathen palaces as well as from Christian homes. But we may safely leave Hatach and his kind to the mercy of that God who is larger than the dogmatists.

I. **A ministerial appointment suggested by self-love.** Hatach was appointed by King Ahasuerus to attend upon Esther. And it must be plain that Ahasuerus made this appointment not to subserve the interests of his subjects, not to consolidate his kingdom, not to make his people virtuous and happy, but to minister either to his own vanity or to his love of pleasure. Such an appointment finds its counterpart in other times and in far different states of society. How many appointments all through life are made in consequence of the working of self-love! We have often heard the phrase court favourites. The minions of the court are found not only in the palace, but in the house of legislature, on the seat of justice, and at the head of the army. The ablest men are not always selected, but the men who can bring the most influence to bear. The men who can successfully appeal to the selfishness of the ruling powers will rise above the heads of those superior men who either cannot or will not use such base means for elevation. It is a happy thing in our times that commoners—men not noble by birth, but noble by sterling worth and by brilliant characters—are taking their place in the front ranks. But still the men who can fawn and cringe and not be true to principle are in high places. In the ecclesiastical kingdom too ministerial appointments are made through the working of this low principle of self-love. Sometimes unconscious, it may be, but nevertheless operative. There is nepotism in the Church. The son or the nephew gets the good living, while the superior man remains a curate still. The man, in other Churches, of showy qualities secures the votes of the congregation, while the man of more solid but less brilliant character is left in obscurity. It is what we

may call a happy chance when the working of self-love brings the best man to the front. We have no reason to suppose that the appointment of Hatach was not a good one.

II. A ministerial appointment suggested by unselfish love. Ahasuerus made a ministerial appointment, and Esther also made a ministerial appointment. Ahasuerus appointed Hatach to attend upon Esther, and Esther gave Hatach a commandment to Mordecai. The latter appointment arose out of the working of unselfish love. Esther's affection for her foster father would not let her rest, and she sent the chamberlain to minister to Mordecai in his distress. The best appointments are those which are made through the working of unselfish love. Selfishness blinds the mind and dwarfs the judgment. Benevolence is a truer guide in affairs than great intellect if perverted by the working of selfishness. The king who through true love to his subjects seeks their highest welfare will make the best appointments in his kingdom. The Church that has a true love for humanity, that is most desirous of blessing the race, of instructing the ignorant, of raising the fallen, and of giving the oil of joy to the mourners, will secure the services of the truest servants in her courts. Shall we not here think of the highest ministerial appointment made at the suggestion of infinite love? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

III. A ministerial appointment to the young and the joyful. We can well imagine that there was great gladness to Hatach when he "received a call" to serve in the palace of Ahasuerus, and had to "attend upon" the young, the beautiful, and the joyful Esther. In one sense it would be a pleasant life, and comparatively free from irksome duties. To wait upon other court beauties might be painful, for the mere beauty is often exacting and difficult to please. The more her demands are met, and the more numerous do they become. The very monotony of her life may render it difficult to soothe her ill humours, and to find the means of relieving the dulness of her existence. But this difficulty would not obtain in the case of Esther, for she had beauty of mind as well as beauty of person. She would be able to fall back upon herself. As the good man is satisfied from himself, so Esther the good woman would be satisfied from herself. It is well said that she required nothing. The smallness of her requirements rendered it an easy task for Hatach to perform the duties of his post. How delightful to wait upon this young and joyful maiden! Instead of Hatach being required to charm away her griefs, we may easily and reasonably suppose that she would be a wise charmer to Hatach. His sorrows would be forgotten in her presence, and his joys would be increased by the influence of her joyful nature. Happy the man who has to wait upon the young and the joyful! As we think of the condition, we shrink from acknowledging the truth of the wise man's statement. Sorrow is better than laughter. Men long for appointments where life is rendered pleasant. To serve in the palace is more an object of ambition than to serve in the abodes of misery. The house of feasting is desired rather than the house of mourning. To preach in the well-arranged and tastefully-built and decorated place of worship to a crowded and fashionable audience is the fond desire of the large majority.

IV. A ministerial appointment to the old and the mournful. Hatach, we find, was willing to go to Mordecai, the poor Jew, clothed in his hairy garment and having ashes on his head. He passes from Esther to Mordecai with no signs of unwillingness. He would willingly find out the means of lessening the anxiety of Esther, while at the same time he seeks to lessen the grief of Mordecai. This is the true ministry, to seek to comfort the aged, and to console the mourners. The highest Minister set himself to this glorious work. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of

sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." How slow most men are to follow this sublime example! This world is full of mourners; but the cries of the mourners would be hushed in greater measure if there were men with sympathetic and benevolent natures going forth with words of gospel sweetness in their hearts, and the oil of gospel consolations in their hands.

V. An undesigned connection arising from this ministerial appointment Here there is a wonderful chain of unexpected links. Ahasuerus, the mighty monarch, ruling over the largest empire of the world, at one end of the chain; and Mordecai, the despised and captive Jew, at the other end of the chain—the joining links being Esther the queen and Hatach the king's chamberlain. From a human point of view, how mysterious are the ways by which men are linked together. The monarch is bound to the captive by an invisible bond, and is nearer than he thinks. We are indeed members one of another. There is a communistic principle working in societies. But let there not be communistic violence. Let not Ahasuerus forget the just claims of Mordecai. Let the monarch remember that manhood has its rights. And let not the Mordecais seek their rights by violence, but betake themselves to fasting and prayer, as did this Mordecai, and deliverance must come sooner or later. But these undesigned connections of earth are the designed connections of heaven. It was evidently so in this case, and it is so in a greater number of cases than we suppose. A greater number of cases! If we believe in a great supreme Power ruling over all, must we not behold his guiding and selecting power and wisdom in all cases, or at least making use of earth's selections for the advancement of his beneficent and all-wise purposes? And God's direct ministerial appointments do establish an extended connection. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation!" The angels form a blessed connection between the poor souls, enslaved by sin, but enfranchised by Divine grace, and the eternal God. Wonderful the connection between Mordecai and Ahasuerus, but surely more wonderful still the connection between the sinful but redeemed creature and the glorious Creator. The gospel ministry speaks to us in visible fashion of this connection. Redeemed men speak to men still in their sins. Christ's true ambassadors stand between and join together the Saviour and the believing sinner. The undesigned coincidences and connections of life are coincidences and connections because God is working. The undesigned may be the product of Divine purpose. The human has its undesigned movements, the Divine has no purposeless motions. All is harmonious. The very discords of earth shall work to the production of final and eternal concords. Chaos itself will give birth to Divine order. Confusion is working to the evolution of method. There are links of connection binding all things together, both in the material and in the moral world.

VI. The unintentional benefit conferred by this ministerial appointment. Ahasuerus had not the slightest idea of helping those Jews against whom he had issued the murderous edict at the instigation of Haman. But here he is. Strange to himself would his conduct have appeared if he had known all. At one time he is working for the destruction of the Jews, and at another working for their deliverance. Working for their deliverance not only in his selection of Esther to be queen, but in the appointment of Hatach to be her minister. Esther herself could not hold conference with Mordecai, and so Hatach the king's chamberlain becomes the medium of communication. The very vices of kings have tended to the welfare of their subjects; but no excuse this for the vices. The blunders of sovereigns have worked out to the vindication of the truth; but this does not condone the blunders. Kings by their weakness, by their love of display, by their fondness for pleasure have unintentionally conferred benefits upon their people. They have sometimes made wise appointments, and the nation has rejoiced because the righteous are in authority. By way of pleasant contrast, notice that the benefits conferred by heaven's ministerial appointments are intentional. God's material ministers move

and work for the bestowal of benefits in answer to his merciful intention. God's intellectual and moral ministers think, and speak, and write, and act for the bestowal of benefits, for they have been raised up for this very purpose by his benevolence. God's benevolence is not the working of a kind feeling only, but is the expression of his infinite mind designing the welfare of his creatures. Whatever benefits we receive from the ministry of others, while we practically show our appreciation of such a beneficial ministry, let us above all manifest our sense of indebtedness to God, from whom and by whom all true ministerial appointments proceed and are made.

Notice that—(*a*) *A true ministry is two-sided.* It is quite true that a ministry of any importance must be many-sided. In these modern times the ministry as that word has come to be used in an ecclesiastical sense, has upon it many claims. The modern minister, if he is to meet the demands of the time, if he is to reach, half way even, the standard set up by lecturers on preaching and preachers, must be more than human; he should indeed have eyes behind and before. But the ministry of which we now speak is one not treated of in books on homiletics. Hatach is not considered in the "*letters ad clerum.*" There is a ministry where no eloquence of tongue is required. The eloquence of the life is that which is required in every ministry. Thus the true ministry is two-sided. It looks to heaven and it looks to earth. It waits upon the joyful and goes with messages of comfort to the mourners. Hatach waited in the palace and then went to the palace gates. Let us use the case as a figurative teaching. Wait in the palace of heaven, by prayer and meditation, that we may minister to those standing without. (*b*) *The highest ministry is impelled by unselfish love.* We are not in a position to declare the motives which operated in the mind of Hatach; but this we know, that the pure womanly love of Esther impelled Hatach to go and speak to the mourning Mordecai. Hatach may after all have been a mere servile menial in the hands of Esther; still his ministry was the result of love in Esther, and was therefore of the highest order. A base minister may perform the useful and beneficial acts of the ministry of love. But where love operates in the mind, love from without and from above co-operating with love from within, and moving to noblest action, there must be the highest ministry. (*c*) *The noblest ministry is that which seeks lowly spheres.* "Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate." Hatach may not have relished the errand on which he was sent, but still he went. Esther commanded, and Hatach obeyed. Lowly spheres may not always be desired; but if the command is given, the command ought to be obeyed. The streets of modern cities are in a neglected condition. The mourners tread the pavements with heavy hearts, and no Hatach asks what is the cause of the sorrow, no Hatach comes from royal abodes to inquire if nothing can be done to remove the burden of grief. Divine love gives a commandment for the poor outcasts—"Go into the highways and hedges," but few are found ready to obey. Those who do go are not always judicious. They have not heart sympathy with the distressed. They raise dismal noises, and become a nuisance; instead of quietly and lovingly asking "what it was, and why it was," as did Hatach. (*d*) *The tests for all ministries.* Is it uniting earth and heaven? Is it bringing together all classes? Every life ought to be a ministry, and every life should be tested by these questions. Is it conferring both material and moral benefits? There should be no unproductive classes. Every life should be a ministry of good. Is it a ministry for the instruction of the ignorant, for the restoration of the fallen, and for the consolation of the mourners? Happy the nation where the inmates of the palace consider and seek to promote the welfare and happiness of those in the streets of the cities and outside the palace gates. There are still Hamans about our palaces. There will be Mordecais with bleeding hearts. And the Esthers and the Hatachs have still plenty of room to work.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 5, 6.

If we weep in sincerity with those who weep, it will be our desire, if possible, to remove their sorrows. But to this end it is necessary to know their cause. Physicians cannot administer proper medicines to their patients unless they know the cause of their diseases. They may palliate the symptoms, but the root of the distemper remains if the cause is not removed. So we may soothe the minds of persons labouring under grief; but if they are rooted in the mind, they will soon recover their force, and hold the soul in misery, unless the causes are removed; and these cannot be removed but by a change in those outward circumstances which occasioned them, or by a change in the state of the mind, when it is convinced that the supposed causes do not exist, or that they are not sufficient grounds for the sorrows they occasioned, or that relief or consolation may be found of virtue sufficient to counteract their force. Esther could not now visit Mordecai, or call him to her palace, and therefore, conversing with him by means of a third person, inquires into the causes of his distress, with a sincere intention to do everything in her power to set his heart at ease.—*Lawson.*

The good queen is astonished with this constant humiliation of so dear a friend, and now sends Hatach, a trusty though a pagan attendant, to inquire into the occasion of this so irremediable heaviness. It should seem Esther inquired not greatly into matters of state; that which perplexed all Shushan was not yet known to her; her followers, not knowing her to be a Jewess, conceived not how the news might concern her, and therefore had forborne the relation. Mordecai first informs her, by her messenger, of the decree that was gone out against all her nation, of the day wherein they must all prepare to bleed, of the sum which Haman had proffered for their heads, and delivers the copy of that bloody edict, charging her now, if ever, to bestir herself, and to improve all her love, all her power, with King Ahasuerus, in a speedy and humble supplication for the saving of the life not of himself so much as of her people.—*Bishop Hall.*

The lesson which I would give you is founded on Mordecai's grief and Esther's sympathy. Gladly would she have removed the sorrow of her friend, and willingly would she have mingled her tears with his, had it been permitted. Her sympathy he could not doubt; but there are griefs deeper than human sympathy can reach, and Mordecai's were beyond Esther's power to assuage. She could only be helpful by speaking to the king. It was the king alone that could change the sorrow into joy. The mourners in Zion have the sympathy of their brethren, and that sympathy is sweet. But still it cannot heal the wounds of a spirit that is troubled by the sense of sin, nor of a heart that is sore pierced by God's afflictive dispensation. But the King of Zion can heal these wounds; and he is touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities—he breaketh not the bruised reed; he will heal them. Cast yourselves upon Jesus, ye mourners, with simple-hearted faith, and ask of him the comfort which ye need, and you will receive the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.—*Davidson.*

So strictly did the laws of Persia confine wives, especially the king's wives, that it was not possible for Mordecai to have a conference with Esther about this important affair; but divers messages are here carried between them by Hatach, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and it seems he was one she could confide in. She sent to Mordecai to know more particularly and fully what the trouble was which he was now lamenting, and why it was that he would not put off his sackcloth. To inquire thus after news, that we may know the better how to direct our griefs and joys, our prayers and praises, well becomes all those that love Zion. If we must weep with those that weep, we must know why they weep.—*Matthew Henry.*

Then called Esther for Hatach.—She snuffeth not at Mordecai's refusal of her courtesy. She saith not, Let him choose; the next offer shall be worse. Solomon reckoneth among those four things that the earth cannot bear, a handmaid advanced to the place and state of a mistress. But Esther was none such. In her you might have seen singular humility in height of honours. She calleth there for Hatach, a faithful servant, and perhaps a Jew, a Jew inwardly. Honesty flows from piety.

Whom he had appointed to attend upon her. — Heb., whom he had set before her, to be at her beck and obedience. Probably he was happy in such a service, for goodness is communicative, and of a spreading nature. Plutarch saith of the neighbour villages of Rome in Numa's time, that, sucking in the air of that city, they breathed righteousness and devotion. So it might very well be here. It was so with Abraham's servants, and Solomon's, and Cornelius's. Nero complained (and no wonder) that he could never find a faithful servant. What could they learn from him but villany and cruelty?

And gave him a commandment to Mordecai, i. e. she commanded him to deliver her mind to Mordecai. A servant is not to be inquisitive (John xv. 15—he knoweth not what his lord doeth), but executive, ready to do what is required of him. He is the master's instrument, and wholly his, *ολως ἐκείνου*, saith Aristotle. The hands must take counsel of the head, and bestir them.

To know what it was, and why it was.—Some great matter she well knew it must needs be that put him to these loud laments. Wise men cry not till they are sorely hurt. Job's stroke was heavier than his groaning. He was not of those that are ever whining; like some men's flesh, if their skin be but razed with a pin, it presently rankleth and festereth; or, like rotten boughs, if a light weight be but hung on them, they presently creak and break. Mordecai she knew was none such. She therefore sendeth to see what was the matter, that she might help him, if possible. The tears and moans of men in misery are not to be slighted, as if they were nothing to us. Who is afflicted, and I burn not? saith Paul. Weep with those that weep, else you add to their misery, as the priest and Levite did by passing by the wounded man. Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass by the way? Are ye not also in the body, that is, in the body of flesh and frailty, subject to like afflictions? And may not your sins procure their sufferings, as a vein is opened in the arm to ease the pain of the head.—*Trapp.*

A Christian is no libertine, no man of freedom. He is a servant. Indeed, we have changed our master. We are set at liberty from the slavery of sin and Satan; but it is not that we should do nothing, to be Belials without yoke; but it is to serve God. We are taken from the service of Satan to be the Lord's freemen; and indeed it is to that end. We are delivered that we might serve God. Therefore all the actions of our life should be a "service" to God. The beasts and other creatures and we have common actions, such as we do in common, as to eat, and to drink, and to move. The beast doth this, and man doth it. When a man doth them they are reasonable actions, because they are guided by reason, and moderated by reason; but when the beast doth them they are the actions of a beast, because he hath no better faculty to guide him. So common actions, they are not a service of God as they come from common men, that have not grace and the Spirit of God in their hearts; they are mere buying and selling, and going about the actions of their callings, as the actions of a beast are the actions of a beast. But let a Christian come to do them, he hath a higher life and a higher spirit that makes them spiritual actions that are common in themselves. He raiseth them to a higher order and rank. Therefore a Christian "serveth" God. In all that he doth he hath an eye to God; that which another man doth with no eye to God, but merely in civil respects. The knowledge of a commonwealth, it is a building knowledge, a commanding knowledge; for though a statesman doth not build, he doth not buy and sell and

commerce, but he useth all other trades for the good of the state. It is a knowledge commanding all other inferior arts and trades in a commonwealth to the last end. They should all be serviceable to the commonwealth; and if they be not, away with them. So religion, and the knowledge of Divine things, it is a commanding knowledge; it commands all other services in our callings, &c. It doth not teach a man what he shall do in particular in his calling; but it teacheth him how to direct that calling to serve God, to be advantageous and helpful to his general calling; to further him to heaven, to make everything reductive to his last end, which he sets before him; that is, to honour and serve God in all things, to whom he desires to approve himself in life and death. He hath a principle, the Holy Ghost in him, and he labours to reduce everything to the main end. Oh that we were in this temper!

God will have his children serve out their generation, to try the truth of our graces before we come to heaven. And he will have us perfect before we come to so holy a place. He will have us "grow in grace," as Ahasuerus his wives were to be perfumed and prepared before they came to him. It is a holy place that we hope for, a holy condition; therefore he will have us by little and little be fitted by the Spirit of God.

The Scripture values men by that that God values them, and not as men do, by their life, and reign, and flourishing in the world, and their esteem with men, but as his carriage hath been to God. David "served the will of God" in his generation.

Concerning the relation of *servants*, in a word, some are so by office, as magistrates and ministers, but all are servants as Christians. It was the best flower in David's garland to be a servant to the Lord; and it is so for every one, be they never so great in dignity, to serve God; for to serve him is to run into the most noble service of all, for all God's servants shall be kings, nay, they are kings. And then it is a rich and most beneficial service; for we serve a Lord that will reward to a cup of cold water. It is not such a service as Pharaoh's was, to gather stubble ourselves; but he will enable us to do, and where we fail he will pardon, and when we do anything he will reward, and when our enemies oppress us he will take our parts.

A child of God is the greatest freeman, and the best servant, even as Christ was the best servant, yet none so free; and the greater portion any man hath of his Spirit, the freer disposition he hath to serve every one in love. Even the basest works are a service of God when they are done in obedience to God. The poor servant "serves the Lord Christ." When a poor servant is at his work, employed in the business of man, poor, common things, yet he serves the Lord all the while. He serves those that are his governors, with an eye to the great Governor and Master that is above all, that will reward them for their poor service, however their master reward them.—*Sibbes.*

Every man may be considered under a double capacity or relation. As he is a part or member of the body politic, and so is not his own, but stands included in and possessed by the community. In which capacity he is obliged to contribute his proportion of help to the public, as sharing from thence with others the benefits of society, and so being accountable to make it some retribution in his particular station and condition. A man may be considered as he is a member and subject of a spiritual and higher kingdom. And in this capacity he is to pursue the personal yet great interest of his own salvation. He is sent into this world to make sure of a better; to glorify his Maker by studying to save himself; and, in a word, to aim at enjoyments Divine and supernatural, and higher than this animal life can aspire unto. Every man then sustains a double capacity, according to which he has a double work or calling. A temporal one, by which he is to fill up some place in the commonwealth by the exercise of some useful profession, whether as a divine, lawyer, or physician; a merchant, soldier, mariner, or any inferior handicraft; by all which, as by so many greater and less wheels, the

business of the vast body of the public is carried on, its necessities served, and its state upheld. And God, who has ordained both society and order, accounts himself so much served by each man's diligent pursuit, though of the meanest trade, that his stepping out of the bounds of it to some other work (as he presumes) more excellent is but a bold and thankless presumption, by which the man puts himself out of the common way and guard of Providence. For God requires no man to be praying or reading when the exigence of his profession calls him to his hammer or his needle; nor commands any one from his shop to go hear sermon in the church, much less to preach one in the pulpit. God, as the Lord and great Master of the family of the universe, is still calling upon all his servants to work and labour. A thing so much disdained by the gallant and the epicure is yet that general standing price that God and nature has set upon every enjoyment this side heaven; and he that invades the possession of anything, but upon this claim, is an intruder and a usurper. I have given order, says the Apostle, "that if any refuse to labour, neither should he eat." It is the active arm and the busy hand that must both purvey for the mouth and, withal, give it a right to every morsel that is put into it. Correspondent to a Christian's other, that is, his spiritual capacity, he has also a spiritual calling or profession; and the work that this engages him to is that grand one of working out his salvation; a work that a life is too little for, had a man anything more than a life to bestow upon it; a work that runs out into eternity, and upon which depends the woe or welfare of an immortal soul. Now this work is threefold —to make our peace with God; to get our sins mortified; to get our hearts purified with the contrary graces.—*South.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 6—9.

A STRANGE MEETING.

The onlookers might very reasonably ask, Who are those two men standing together, in close conference, in the street of the city before the king's gate, and what is the meaning of their confidential interview? For it must have been an unusual thing for the king's chamberlain to be seen talking to a despised Jew. The wicked, those who took part with revengeful Haman, might well consider the meeting with alarm. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but here is a man pursuing—a man armed with Divine powers, as is evident from his history—a man of strong purpose, of upright intentions, and of sagacious spirit—and the wicked had every reason for alarm had they only known the situation. But those who were not condemned in their own consciences might calmly pass these two men by, and pursue without fear their appointed way. It is well so to conduct our lives that we need not be suspicious of evil when we see others holding private interviews. Whispers can only disturb guilty consciences. Some might fancy that these two men thus strangely meeting together were plotting mischief against the monarch. For men are ever too prone to think evil. But we know better. Let us consider the nature of this strange meeting.

I. An important interview. The importance of a conference is not always to be measured by the number of persons gathered together. The meeting of two people may be fraught with more important results than the meeting of two thousand. Indeed, as too many cooks spoil the broth, so it often is that too many people at a conference bring about confusion, and no practical results are produced. And, after all, at large conferences the manipulation of measures is in the hands of a few, either of the wisest or of the most pushing. The meeting of Hatach and of Mordecai was one of the most important at that period in the dominion of Ahasuerus. The importance of a conference is not to be measured by the magnificence of the place

of meeting. In the present day if any great philanthropic, political, or religious measure is to be discussed, a large gathering must be summoned in the splendid hall, in the gilded saloon, or in the stately ecclesiastical edifice. There was once a small gathering in an insignificant upper room which was productive of greater results than any assembly since that time. Hatach and Mordecai met in the street, but they did more important work than the grandees meeting in Shushan the palace. The importance of a conference is not always to be measured by the worldly position —by the names of the men who meet together as renowned for rank, for prowess in arms, for skill in strategy, for genius in oratory, or for excellence in debate—of those who are assembled. Though this is the modern fashion, a fashion which has been repeating itself through all time. The *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Daily News* would have given as many lines to record the insignificant fact that Ahasuerus had taken a walk, as they would to record the important interview between Hatach and Mordecai in the streets of the city. But mighty issues were depending upon this interview. That which is little noticed is often of most importance. That which the superficial do not observe may be transcendently significant. The meeting of two poor men may either destroy or save the city, but it is unnoticed in earthly chronicles; while the meetings of the rich and of the great are described in glowing phrases, though their meetings may be of no consequence to the world at large, beneficially considered. Notice the wisdom of the sacred chronicles. They describe the meetings, whether of rich or of poor, whether of kings or of subjects, whether of noble or of ignoble, that have far-reaching results. These chronicles take no superficial views. They record for all time. The meeting of Saul the persecutor and Christ the Saviour was not recorded by the scribes, but it was the most important meeting of all time.

II. A full disclosure. "And Mordecai told him of all that had happened." A sorrowful tale was that which Mordecai had to tell, and no doubt very painful to him would be the relation. But he did not shrink from the painful task, for patriotism laid upon him a stern necessity. Sometimes it is a mitigation of our sorrows to unburden our minds fully, and to tell all the tale of the causes of our grief to a friend; at others, silence, or comparative reserve, is our safety. We may well suppose, that here, in one aspect, Mordecai would not wish to tell all to this eunuch. Still it must be told, and sternly he opens up his sores to one of a foreign nation. Sometimes sin presses heavily upon the mind of the convinced sinner. But he shrinks from a candid inspection of his sinfulness, and from full confession even to that God who knows all. The sensitive mind naturally recoils from full confession of sinfulness to a fellow-creature; and yet, why should we shrink from full confession to God? The truest wisdom is to make a full disclosure. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Mordecai made *a full disclosure of the intensity of Haman's purpose.* Money power was evidently as omnipotent in Persia as it is in England. Haman was so intent upon the accomplishment of his purpose that he promised to pay a large sum of money into the king's treasuries. This is still a good test by which to get to know whether or not a man is intense in his purpose. When a man expresses an earnest desire to have some scheme carried out, just ask him how much he is willing to give for its accomplishment? Money may be given with the sincere desire of doing good. This is the noblest method of disposing of wealth. In fact, the only true method. In this way there is that scattereth earthly treasure and yet increaseth; sometimes earthly treasure, but at all times heavenly treasure. We must see to it that our motive is pure in giving. Money may be given for the purpose of making a name. Too many give at the dictate of an ostentatious spirit. The printing of subscription-lists is a device of the wisdom of this world. Divine wisdom says, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. Money may be promised and given in order to promote an evil purpose. It was so in the case of Haman. He knew it would help on his evil design. He probably knew that

he would gain by the transaction if it were successful. Too many give even to a good cause with the hope of getting their money back with a large percentage for the loan. For it is little more than a loan. It is a kind of speculative transaction. Mordecai made a full *disclosure of the malignity of Haman's purpose.* Haman's dark design was to destroy all the Jews. It is highly probable that Haman had hatred for all the Jews, and that the offence of Mordecai was but the means of calling out that hatred into active play. Haman might blame Mordecai, but he had much more reason to blame his own ill-regulated nature. How often we blame others, when we ought to blame ourselves! The fancied, or even real, wrong-doings of others can be no justification for wrong on our part. Even if Mordecai were wrong in refusing to bow, Haman was not right in seeking revenge. Let us seek the subjugation of inward evil, and then outward evil will not act upon us injuriously, for it will find no kindred element on which to work. Mordecai would not make a full *disclosure unless he spoke of his own concern for the safety and welfare of his people.* He told of all that happened to him, and what happened to the Jews was a sorrow to the patriotic Mordecai. He would not in unseemly boastfulness extol his patriotism. Yet he must show that he was most deeply interested in the fate of his countrymen. For himself, he was ready to die if his death would secure the deliverance of his people. But his heart was bleeding at the thought that all his people were exposed to death. We want this spirit, to lose our own personal sorrows in the sorrows of our people.

III. Witnessing credentials. The tale which Hatach had to tell to Esther was one of a most marvellous character. It is an illustration of the statement that fact is stranger than fiction. Esther might very well doubt the truth of this dark design. But there could be no escape from the fact when Hatach placed in her hands the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan. This writing might be given to Esther not only to witness to the truth of Hatach's narration, but that she might more fully understand all the bearings of the case. When we have a tale to tell detrimental to the character of another let us be sure that we are correct. Let us look out for the copy of the writing of the decree. Some people in telling an evil tale about another think it is quite sufficient to say he has a bad character. Haman was a bad character. Esther must have read his nature. But Mordecai does not say Haman's character is enough to make Esther believe the story, but he sends along with the story a copy of the writing of the decree. We must not condemn a man on mere *hearsay.* And again, some people in telling an evil tale profess to be indignant if they are not at once believed. Mordecai did not say, If Esther does not believe my story the matter must drop; I shall say no more; she has no right to suppose that I should fabricate an evil story. But, like a wise man, he backs up the story with a copy of the writing of the decree. It might be a more unjust thing for me to believe a man capable of some great crime than for me to doubt the man who speaks of such capability. There should be credentials to every tale. If every evil accusation were to be believed and acted upon, our prisons would have to be very considerably enlarged.

IV. A solemn charge. Esther was charged by Mordecai to go in unto the king. The Persian queen was not as the English queen. The former was subject. She had not the rights of an ordinary English wife. She could not go in and out as she pleased. It was therefore a solemn charge which Mordecai now gave to Esther. He knew the gravity of the work, and already his faith had fixed upon Esther as God's chosen instrument. Esther was now charged to go on a perilous errand. She was to go alone. It is easier to go with the multitude to face danger than to go alone. Many a man who would be bold in the company of a multitude, would be a coward when standing alone. From time to time we receive solemn charges to go alone, or to stand alone. Let us be faithful to the call and the post of duty. This is our great encouragement; there is never any danger in going alone, in a right spirit, unto the King Eternal. The danger is in not going alone

sufficiently often. How often conscience charges us to go in unto the King, and how often we disobey! The neglect of private prayer is ruinous to the soul.

V. An honourable office. The office to which Esther was now appointed was that of intercessor. How noble and glorious the work to intercede on behalf of the people! How noble the conduct of Bunyan's wife pleading with the judge for her husband's liberty! How noble the conduct of Queen Philippa pleading with Edward for the pardon of the six burgesses of Calais! But nobler still was that office to which Esther was appointed to plead with the king for the salvation of her people. There was neither selfishness prompting to, nor applause to be secured, by Esther's course of conduct, so far as she then knew. The work of an intercessor is ever glorious. What glory attaches to him who is the great High Priest of the Christian religion! That he might be a successful pleader he not merely exposed himself to danger, but passed through suffering. Esther might be a successful pleader without herself suffering. We know that she was. The very success of her intercessions contributed to her greatness and her glory. But Jesus could only be a successful intercessor as he endured suffering. He was made perfect through suffering, that he might be a faithful High Priest. Let us confess our indebtedness to this glorious Intercessor. Let us not stint our meed of praise. Let us consecrate ourselves to his holy and ennobling service.

VI. A faithful messenger. It very often depends upon the nature of the message as to whether or not we like faithfulness in the messenger. However, the rule should be not what is liked, but what is right to be done. It was right for Hatach to tell a true tale to Esther, though it might sorely grieve her heart. Some messengers would have told Esther only half a tale, and have made Mordecai's story amount to nothing. Some doctors never give a true statement of the case to their patients, and thus sometimes do great harm. It perhaps would not be wise always to tell all the truth. But it is never wise to tell an untruth, or to bring a false report. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters." Let us be faithful messengers. Speak the truth in love. Be refreshing powers in this land of drought.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 6—9.

And Mordecai told him all that had happened unto him.—Not by fate or blind fortune, but by the providence of God, which hath a hand in ordering the most casual and fortuitous events, to the execution of his righteous counsels; neither is there a Providence but we shall once see a wonder or a mercy wrapt up in it.

And of the sum of money.—Money is the monarch of this present world. Money is to many dearer than their heart's blood, yet, to gratify their lusts, they lavish silver out of the bag, and care not to purchase revenge or sensual delights with misery, beggary, discredit, damnation.

Also he gave him the copy of the writing.—That she might see it, and rest assured that it was even so, and no otherwise; and that therefore now or never she must bestir herself for the labouring Church.

That was given at Shushan.—Which if ever it were full of judgment, and white as a lily (according to the name), is now stained with blood of innocents; if ever righteousness did lodge in it, yet now murderers.

To show it unto Esther.—That her eye might affect her heart, and her heart set all awork for her people; that is, herself, according to that, "Physician, heal thyself;" that is, thine own countrymen.

And to declare it unto her.—In the cause, viz. his refusing to bow to Haman against his conscience (whereof it no whit repented him); and in the several circumstances, laid forth in the liveliest colours, for her thorough information.

And to charge her that she should go in unto the king.—This Mordecai knew would hardly be done; he, therefore, makes use of his ancient authority, and sets it on with greatest earnestness. So St. Paul, "I charge you by the Lord;" and again, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a weakness to be hot in a cold matter, but it is wickedness to be cold in a hot matter. He that is earnest in good, though he may carry some things indiscreetly, yet is he far better than a time-server and a cold friend to the truth; like as in falling forward is nothing so much danger as in falling backward. Eli was to blame with his, Do no more so, my sons. And so was Jehoshaphat with his, Let not the king say so. And the people in Ahab's time, who, when they were pressed to express whom they were for, God or Baal, they answered not a word. And yet how many such cold friends hath the truth now-a-days!—lukewarm Laodiceans; neuter, passive Christians, &c. When Callidus once declared against Gallus with a faint and languishing voice, Oh, saith Tully, *In nisi figeres, sic ageres?* Wouldest thou plead in that manner if thou wert in good earnest? Men's faint appearing for God's cause shows they do but feign; their coldness probably concludeth they do but counterfeit. Mordecai plays the man, and chargeth Esther to improve her interest in the king, her husband, for the Church's deliverance. See here how he turneth every stone, tradeth every talent, leaveth no means unused, no course unattempted, for the saints' safety. And this the Spirit of God hath purposely recorded, that all may learn to lay out themselves to the utmost for the public; to be most zealous for the conservation and defence of the Church, when it is afflicted and opposed by persecutors; seeing they cannot be saved unless she is in safety, neither can they have God for their Father unless they love and observe this their dear mother. Oh that these things were duly considered by all sorts now-a-days!

And Hatach came and told Esther.—He acted the part of a faithful messenger: so must ministers, those servants of the Churches, declare unto the people all the mind of God, and not steal God's word every one from his neighbour; not deal deceitfully with it; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, let them speak in Christ; and let them speak out not fearing any colours. He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully, saith God. Aaron's bells were all of gold; the trumpets of the sanctuary were of pure silver; they did not sound a retreat when they should have sounded an alarm; no more must God's messengers. Whatsoever the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak, saith Micaiah. Paul, as he received what he delivered, so he delivered whatsoever he received. Moses was faithful in all God's house.—*Trapp.*

It is unpleasant to be the messenger of bad tidings. It is, however, often useful. If a physician saw you labouring under a mortal distemper, and insensible to your danger, he is the preserver of your life, when, by warning you of the peril of your condition, he rouses your diligence to apply the proper remedy. Esther must have been shocked beyond measure at hearing of a sentence of death pronounced against her dearest friends, against her whole people, against herself, by the man who had raised her to a share in his bed, and in his throne, without a crime proved against any one of them. But it was better to hear of it at present, than ten or eleven months afterwards, when it would be too late to provide a remedy

There are some who cannot bear to hear of any bad tidings, however true, and think those men their enemies who tell them the truth. They consider those friends or preachers as their enemies who speak to them of their sins, and of the judgments of God denounced against them. But was not Esther under deep obligations to Mordecai for informing her of the danger of her people, and urging her to exert her influence for preserving them? Whether was Ahab most indebted to those prophets who told him that the Lord was with him, and would give him victory at Ramoth-Gilead, or to him who told him that he would fall in the battle? By following

the counsel of the former, he lost his life. He might have preserved it, if he had believed the latter.

It is indeed cruel to distress men by false or doubtful intelligence of calamities that have not happened, or, if they have happened, cannot be remedied. Mordecai was far from wishing to disquiet the mind of his royal friend by uncertain rumours. But he had too good intelligence to be mistaken, and puts into her hands decisive proofs of the danger of her people, and of Haman's activity in procuring their ruin. Nor did he give her this intelligence to torment her before the time. If nothing could have been done to avert the danger, he might have permitted her to enjoy tranquillity till it could be concealed no longer. But who could tell what might be the result of supplication to the king, especially from a queen who was understood to be the object of his warmest love! He therefore desires, or rather requires, her to go in and make intercession to the king for the people, and for her own life.

Mordecai uses authority in his language to the queen, and does her great honour by using such language. He durst not have charged her to do her duty, if he had not known her humbleness of mind in her greatness. She was as much disposed as in her youngest days to give him the authority of a father; and this he knew so well that he uses it without scruple or apology. Happy are the men on whom prosperity makes no change but for the better!

He charges her to make intercession to the king. The knowledge of that dreadful situation in which the Jews were placed, was to be improved by all the Jews as a call to fasting and intercession with the God of heaven, on whom their hope was to rest. But it was to be improved by the queen in particular, as a motive to the exertion of all her influence with the king. All, according to their places and stations, are bound to do what they can to avert threatened miseries from their nation. But some are bound to do much more than others, because they have peculiar opportunities, which, if they are not improved, must render them in some degree accountable for the mischiefs consequent on their neglect. Those who can do nothing by their own power, may do much by their influence with others. In the reign of the bloody Jehoiakim, the princes of Judah saved Jeremiah from his hands. If these princes had not used their influence for this purpose, they must have shared in the guilt of his blood.—*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 10—12.

PRUDENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Objections may be raised against any enterprise simply by way of shielding the unwillingness of the objectors. They object merely for the sake of objecting. They are unwilling to come out boldly and say that they do not intend to take any part in the scheme. They hide themselves behind the false plea of the difficulties in the way of bringing the scheme to a successful issue. They may see both the necessity and the propriety of the work being done, and are too cowardly to profess themselves unwilling to do their duty. They would show themselves as willing to do the work, and yet keep affirming that the work cannot be done. Now the after conduct of Esther cannot justify us in supposing that she raised objections on this principle. She is not here to be hastily condemned. Again, some raise objections through the working of a prudential spirit. They earnestly desire to further the enterprise, but are appalled by the presence of real difficulties. Such deserve our sympathy. Surely Esther in this trying period of her history will command our sympathy. The objections she here raises are of no fictitious character. They were real. They were well known to Mordecai, and to all those acquainted with the customs of a Persian court. Poor Esther!—how well thou dost

deserve our sympathy! A beautiful queen loved by all, and till very lately adored by the monarch, thou dost now stand alone and apparently forsaken of all. Yet not alone, for thy God is with thee, and will appear to thy glory. Even when we seem to be most forsaken, then it may be that the good Lord is most near. His help is sure to be near when most we need his helping hand.

The first objection raised by Esther **referred to a state arrangement of the Persian court.** None could unbidden approach the monarch unless by incurring the penalty of death. Even the loved wife was not excluded from this barbarous arrangement. What, then, was Esther to do under the circumstances? How was it likely that she could become a successful pleader! Here there was the prospect of death. Who likes to rush on death, especially when life is opening out new attractions! Esther was not now a disappointed jade; her heart was not yet broken. The little neglect she now experienced would soon pass away. It could not have been an unknown event in such a state of things as prevailed in a Persian court. She had then still bright prospects, and was she by mere rashness to imperil her position, and to imperil that position for no good purpose? Death can only be welcomed by those whose life is but a living death. To most death is feared. To the young and the beautiful death is a fearsome enemy. Well may Esther be appalled by the difficulty of that enterprise to which Mordecai would summon her in the intense ardour of his patriotism.

The second objection raised by Esther **referred to a fact of a domestic character.** She had not been called to go in unto the king for thirty days. Here is a strange anomaly—strange if received in the light of Christian teaching and the customs of modern life. But not very peculiar if viewed in connection with the customs of those barbaric days. The ardour of this fickle monarch had for the time cooled. The beauty of the toy pleased him for a while, and now he flung it from him, and suffered it to lie neglected. A poor soul was Ahasuerus to prefer the company of the wicked Haman before the company of the beautiful and virtuous Esther. However, this fact made a greater difficulty in the way of Esther's success. It presented the prospect not only of death but of failure. If she had lost her influence with the monarch for herself, how could she hope to influence him for the salvation of a despised race? We cannot wonder that Esther shrank from obeying the summons of Mordecai. Our wonder is that she was ever able to nerve herself up to go in unto the king. The greatness of her heroism comes out in this fact, that she fully saw all the difficulty of her position, all the hazard of the enterprise, and yet she ventured. She calmly estimated the danger, and bravely made the venture.

Here learn (1) That it is well to *look before we leap.* "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." 2. *That he who looks well may be expected to leap well.* To look well is not to look so as to render the nature powerless by reason of the hazard. To look well is to estimate the difficulties at their true measure, and to understand the nature of the leap which is required, and to gather up all strength—strength from every quarter—strength from earth and strength from heaven—in order to make a successful leap. Esther looked well and then leaped well. The world's heroes have been men of true vision. They have seen all. They have looked at all sides. They have considered the *for* and the *against.* 3. *That the difficult leap may be the Divine pathway.* Human pathways are not as the Divine. God's pathways are not all well paved—smooth and level. We can only travel along

them by leaps; yea, the very leap itself is the Divine way. Rough was Esther's path just now, but it was her Divinely-appointed way. 4. *That those who take the difficult leap at the call of duty may expect Divine support.* This is what Mordecai implies in his reply to Esther's objections, and this is what we shall find that she afterwards experienced. Divine support is given to every faithful worker. Divine support is the guarantee of ultimate success. In our goings we may get battered and bruised; but a Divine hand can heal the bruises, and restore the battered part to soundness. Our very bruises may be our salvation, and contribute to the success of our cause. The cause may rise by and upon the fall of its supporters. It is not every worker who has the good fortune of Esther. She contributed both to the success of her cause, and worked out greater glory for herself. However, that servant is glorious who triumphs in his fall if it secures the success of his cause Jesus died, that by his death men might have life. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 10—12.

There are two kinds of courage—the mere *animal* courage, which results from well-strung nerves, and is exerted by impulse rather than by reflection; and the *moral* courage, which, on a calm calculation of difficulties, and of the path of duty, will face the difficulties and prosecute the path of duty at any hazard, even at the risk of life itself. It will often be found that men are deficient in the latter of these qualities, while they are remarkable for the former. It will be found, for example, that soldiers who will rush fearlessly upon an enemy, braving death without one symptom of alarm, are incapable of submitting to the calm endurance of trouble, and are like others alarmed when they have to meet death quietly after lingering illness. It is courage of the highest and noblest order, then, we say, which braves danger and death upon cool reflection. Such was the courage of the martyrs, and such was the courage of Esther. As a timid female, she drew back at first from the hazardous enterprise to which Mordecai called her; but when she had fully weighed the matter, and perceived the real path of duty, although the danger was not in the least degree diminished, she resolved, in the strength of God, to encounter it.—*Davidson.*

But why was Esther so afraid of her life if she should make intercession to the king for the life of her people? Was it so criminal in the court of Persia to present a supplication to the king? Or, if it was a crime in others, was it a crime even in the queen? Yes; it was universally known, says Esther, and Mordecai could not well be ignorant of it, that if any person should venture, uncalled, to approach the king in the inner court of his palace, he must be put to death, unless the king was pleased graciously to pardon him; nor was the queen herself excepted from the penalties of this law. The laws of the Persians were strange indeed! No man was allowed in a mourning-habit to enter into the king's gate; and no man in any apparel was allowed to come near the king in the inner court. Did these kings ever consider for what end they were elevated above their fellow-men? Was it not to defend the poor and the afflicted, and to do judgment and justice to all their people? How could they do the duties of princes, if they were inaccessible to their people? But if it was a crime to intrude into the private apartments of the palace, and to disturb the privacy of the prince, was it one of those atrocious crimes that can be justly punished with death? Could no easier punishment assuage the wrath of a proud mortal, who wished to make himself invisible like his Maker? Surely it may be said of a law that punished an offence like this with death, that it was written in blood; and of a government which would establish such laws, that Daniel had too good reason to epresent it by the emblem of a bear.*

* Dan. vii. 5.

Blessed be God, the laws of heaven are not like those of the Persians! Our King who dwells on high is at all times accessible to the afflicted mourner. The poor and the afflicted had ready access to Jesus while he was upon the earth; nor is he less accessible in his state of glory. At all times we may come near to God, even to his throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Esther was believed by Mordecai to be a great favourite with the king; and doubtless there was a time when she was very dear to him. But Esther was afraid that this time was past, and questioned whether Mordecai would insist upon the charge he had given her, when he was informed, that for thirty days past she had not been called to go in unto the king. This she considered as a sign that his affection was alienated, and that it was questionable whether the golden sceptre would be held out to her, if she should presume to enter the king's apartment. What reason the king had for this coldness to his virtuous queen, we know not. This is plain, that it was a providential trial appointed for Esther, by which it would be known whether she had the courage to serve her people and her God at the risk of her life. It was a severe trial of her faith and charity. She felt the force of the discouragement, and expressed her sense of it to Mordecai, that she might receive further directions from him.

To whatever difficult duty we are called, we may lay our account with trials. If thou desirest to serve the Lord, look for temptation. But remember, that "the man is blessed who endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive of the Lord the crown of life which he hath promised to them that love him." Those who have held on in the path of duty, under sore temptation, shall at last "stand before the throne of God with white robes, and palms in their hands." "But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake of fire burning with brimstone, which is the second death." —*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 13, 14.

A HUMAN VOICE SPEAKS DIVINE LESSONS FOR HUMAN LIVES.

God has not left himself without witness in the material creation. Through all time he has been, and is still, speaking to the children of men by the visible things of the lower world, which he hath made. On all hands we may find testimonies to his power, his wisdom, and even in some measure to his goodness. A clearer witness he gives of himself in revelation. By its aid we learn to read aright the lessons of nature. By its teachings we are taught truths nature could not teach. There the voices of patriarch, of prophet, of apostle, and of the Great Teacher, speak to us Divine lessons. But there we find other voices speaking in an undertone, but none the less inculcating Divine lessons, and laying down the true rules for noble living. Mordecai is not to be numbered amongst either the patriarchs, the prophets, or the apostles, still his voice is morally significant. Esther, on the first hearing of Mordecai's answer, might only hear the voice of a man; but afterwards she evidently heard in that voice a Divine tone. Whatever she did or did not discern in the voice of Mordecai it is for us to hear it speaking to us Divine lessons. If we rightly judge that Mordecai was a Divine agent, then we shall rightly conclude that an important utterance like the one contained in this solemn declaration is not to be allowed to fall to the ground as meaningless. And perhaps it may be well to observe, that if we were in a proper frame of mind, if we were more receptive of Divine impressions, many voices that are now allowed to pass away as unimportant would become to us as true Divine utterances. What are the Divine lessons which this human voice speaks, not only to Esther but to every true soul?

I. **That great advantages are conferred for a Divine purpose** By far too

large a majority of men and of women receive the advantages of talents, of position, of influence, and of wealth, with unreflecting minds as well as unthankful hearts. Like the lower animals, they receive blessings without thinking that they ought to be turned to good account. They forget that privilege implies responsibility; that talents are given that they may be put to Divine uses. That receiving is in order to giving. This is the law of nature. This is the law of morals. This is the law for individuals, for communities, for nations, and for Churches. Esther had conferred upon her the great worldly advantage of being made queen in the mightiest empire of the then known world; and Mordecai would show her that such an advantage was not without its Divine purpose. She had come to the kingdom for such a time as that—a time of trouble and perplexity to her people, a time when she might use the advantages of her position for the people's deliverance. And have we not all conferred upon us great advantages? Some are blessed with advantages of an earthly nature. Most are blessed with the advantage of hearing the sweet sound of the gospel. Many are blessed with the advantage of being members of the Church which is the bride of Heaven's Eternal King. Here is an advantage, if we could only rightly see it, before which the advantage of Esther in being made the queen of Ahasuerus pales its splendours. If Mordecai could see that Esther's advantages were conferred for a Divine purpose, what would he say, what shall we conclude, with reference to our advantages? Now these advantages are only rightly considered as they are viewed in the light of Divine purposes. What shall I say of my money? Is it given merely for the purpose of self-aggrandisement? Shall I not use it as the wise steward, feeling that it is the Lord's property? What shall I say of my talents? Are they given merely that I may become famous amongst men? Shall I not feel that they are to be employed for the good of men and for the glory of God? What shall I say of the gospel by which I am saved? Am I merely to try and keep it to myself? Am I not saved myself that I may help to save others? Thus to look at all our blessings in the light of a Divine benevolent purpose, is the way to bring about a more intense appreciation of those blessings, as well as to ennoble and glorify our lives. This is the true light which can enlighten the murky days of our earthly existence. The most brilliant—most brilliant from an earthly point of view—of earthly lives can be made more brilliant by causing them consciously and intentionally to subserve and to promote Divine purposes. And the poorest of earthly lives may be lifted out of the darkness of their poverty by being consecrated to the great end of glorifying God our Maker. This is the light which cheered the patriarchs in their long pilgrimages, which sustained the prophets in their trying careers, which supported the apostles in their self-denying labours, and which made radiant the dark pathway of the martyrs. And this is a light which, by Divine grace, can turn for every man the gloom of earth into the glad lightsomeness of heaven.

II. **That God requires that such advantages should be faithfully used for the promotion of his purposes.** Mordecai's voice to Esther was a Divine summons. It was God's call, telling her to make use of the advantages of her position for the deliverance of the oppressed. It seemed to say, Thou hast been raised to a high position for the good of others. This is a great crisis in the history of providential movements, and thou hast come to the kingdom by Divine appointment. And here learn one of the lessons of God's providential dealings for the support of our faith—that in times of great trial God has his delivering agents in prepared readiness. Esther was ready when Haman's plot was culminating. David was ready when Goliath threatened the armies of Israel. Elijah was ready when the prophets of Baal were triumphing. The true prophets were ready when the need was great. Jesus was ready when the fulness of the time was come. Stephen was ready when a martyr was required, and Saul was to be converted. Peter was ready when the gospel was to be given to the Gentiles. Paul was ready when argumentative skill was demanded. Luther was ready when Romanism was rife

with darkest heresy. The 2000 confessors were ready when a protesting testimony was to be delivered. Whitefield and Wesley were ready when religion in this land was declining. And we may still believe that God has his agents ready. This is our consolation, and this is also to stimulate to greater energy. Advantages are to be faithfully used for the promotion of Divine purposes. Is it objected that we do not know what are the purposes of God? It may be replied that we shall not fail in serving Divine purposes if we sincerely seek to promote his glory. Our efforts may be blundering and imperfect, yet if sincere our imperfect doings will be wrought into, and made to form an important part of, the great Divine plan. Upward, then, O Church of the living God, to a faithful discharge of thy duties! Let all talents, all advantages, all opportunities, and all seasonable occasions be quickly seized and ardently employed in the noblest cause. Let the Mordecais at the gates and the Esthers in the palaces co-operate, for a great crisis has been reached. And who knows but that a great crisis has been reached in our own country's history? Are we ready? Whether that be so or not, in this world of sin there is always much work to do. It may be again objected that we have no great advantages,—no specialty either of talents or of position. Mordecai had no position, but he was a most important instrument in Divine providence, because he was faithful. Esther at first seemed to plead that she could do nothing. It may be, that, like Esther, we can do a great deal more than we at first imagine. Yea, like Esther, we may be able to do that very thing which God requires to be done. And this should be our great encouragement to still more faithful and ardent endeavour—that God does not demand from any that which they are not able to give. God condemns, not because there is only one talent—for that might be to condemn his own appointment—but because the one talent has not produced any interest. He does not require the impossible. A Samson's strength is not expected from an infant's weakness. The hesitating Isaac asks, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" The child's question was natural and innocent. It required Abraham's faith to say: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt-offering." God deals with the child Isaac according to one method, and with the patriarch Abraham according to another. Divine methods are methods of justice guided by wisdom, and tempered by mercy. There is one power of the sun, and another very feeble of the glow-worm. There is the majesty of the cedar-trees, and the weakness of the grass-blade. One star differeth from another star in glory. And one man differeth from another in talents, in organization, in wealth, in favourable circumstances and surroundings. There are differences of administration; but the same spirit worketh all and in all. The Infinite Ruler only requires that we reach out and up to the measure of our ability. To Hatach is one service appointed; to Mordecai another; and to Esther another. The voice of exhortation is: Art thou but a bruised reed?—put on thy strength. Art thou but as a smoking taper?—shine as brightly as thou canst, and the little spark will grow into a goodly flame, and send out its light far and wide. Hast thou but one talent?—put it out to usury, and at the Lord's coming he shall receive his own with interest. Hast thou but two mites?—cast them both into the treasury of the Lord, and thou shalt enrich the ages.

III. That such Divine purposes cannot be frustrated. Human purposes can be thwarted, as we know very well. Man cannot foresee all the contingent circumstances which may form a barrier through which his purposes cannot pass, or which they cannot overleap, and move onward to accomplishment. Man cannot always watch over his purposes from their inception to a triumphant conclusion. Man is not only short-sighted but short-lived. This is one sign of man's greatness and man's littleness—that he can project purposes that may flourish over his tomb. With God, however, purpose and fulfilment are closely connected. The latter is bound up in the former. Our finite minds cannot understand what is meant by the purpose of God. There is a future to man, but what future can there be to

the Omnipresent? Man looks forward to an object to be accomplished, but does the Infinite One look either before or after? Certainly not, in one sense. This, however, we may most surely learn—that there is not purpose with God in a merely human sense; there can be to him no contingent future; the march of human events must be harmonious with Divine movements, whatever they may be. If then one agent, through that wonderful gift of moral power, refuses to be God's instrument, he can purpose another. If Esther determines to hold her peace, then shall there deliverance arise from another place—by another agent. Notice the wonderful manner of Divine operations. If the agent is at first unwilling, then God comes forth and makes such agent willing for the day of his Divine power. Esther at first unwilling, through the natural timidity of her sex, through the sense of her incompetency to do any good, becomes in God's hand sweetly moulded and fitted for the task, so that she becomes heroical in her complete self-abandonment to the promotion of the Divine design. Moses at first says: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" But Moses afterwards appears a God to Pharaoh; and Aaron his prophet. If we be the Lord's chosen he will prepare us to do his work. And yet further—and sadly to be considered if not instructively—if we remain obdurate, if we do not try to read aright Divine purposes, and the meaning of our present position, God can use us against our will. He can force us to take part in the promotion of the benevolent scheme. He could make an unwilling Esther bring enlargement and deliverance to the Jews. How humiliating! To be the bond-slave of Divine purposes. To be like a galley-slave compelled to work the oars of the vessel that is to enrich the one we oppose. How glorious, on the other hand, to be a willing servant—a slave, yet free, because the slave of love. Esther's praises are now sung not because she was the queen of Ahasuerus, but because she was the delivering queen of her people, the royal agent to bring about Divine purposes. God's purposes then must be accomplished, either by us, or by some others; either by us willingly, or by us unwillingly; and we have in some measure this awful power of choice. Which way do we decide? Let the response be, "Here am I, O Lord, but a broken vessel; yet mend and prepare, so that I may be a chosen vessel to bear abroad the sweet fragrance of the Saviour's name."

IV. Those who seek to frustrate Divine purposes shall be injured. Mordecai by the greatness of his faith becomes at once both heroic and prophetic. He is a teaching prophet. He expounds the general principles of Divine operations. His faith is both a production and a producer. It is the product of far-reaching views of the purposes of God. And it begets in his soul still more extended views. It lifts him to the heights of inspiration. He speaks like one inspired. He speaks as one moved by the Holy Ghost. Strong faith is an inspiration. It enables a man to do great things, and to speak noble truths. How strangely marvellous and profound the utterance; "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. If thou altogether holdest thy peace . . thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Think not that thou canst fight against the purposes of God and remain uninjured. The king's palace cannot protect those who wage war with the King of heaven. These may seem hard things to utter. Mordecai may be pronounced an unfeeling man. The doctor is not necessarily an unfeeling man when he probes the wound in order to promote health. The speaker is not necessarily an unfeeling man when he utters hard things in order to prevent injury, and to rouse to healthy action. Mordecai is not unfeeling, for there was a needs be that the whole truth should be spoken. And these things are largely and broadly true. The purposes of God are as the thick bosses of his bucklers, and those who rush against those thick bosses will do so to their own damage. Those who go contrary to the unwritten purposes of God in nature will do so to their own injury. The laws of nature are the expressions of Divine purposes. These laws must be obeyed. All men who are reasonable acknowledge this. They seek to find out these laws, and work in harmony with nature's teachings. Break the natural

law, and it will be avenged. Frustrate the purpose of the Creator, and damage and suffering must ensue sooner or later. There is a purpose in providential movements. We may not always be able to see clearly that purpose, but if we desire to be faithful God will reveal so much of that purpose as is needful for our guidance. Woe be to the man who opposes the purposes of God in providence. There is a gracious purpose in the gospel. Resist that purpose, and destruction follows. "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Finally, **Learn that a faithful discharge of duty must bring rich results.** It was so in Esther's case, as we shall more fully see hereafter. She followed Mordecai's leading, and was both blessed and the instrument of blessing. It will be so more or less in all cases. The results of a faithful discharge of duty are far-reaching. They stretch themselves through all time. They are fraught with eternal issues. They act and react. Mercy blesses him that gives and him that takes. And so a faithful discharge of duty blesses giver and receiver alike. Beware of the folly of waiting for rare opportunities, for glorious openings, for great crises in human history. Do not wait till a nation is threatened with destruction, and thou art raised to some high position which will enable thee to deliver on a grand scale, and reap a harvest of applause. All cannot be queens in the palace of Ahasuerus. Some must be as Mordecai at the gate. The man who waits in idleness for some great work to do will not be ready when the opportunity is presented, will most likely live a barren life, and will leave behind no fragrant memories. There are rich rewards to faithful workers. Rich rewards on earth and rich rewards in heaven. Crowns of glory that fade not away. Our small doings will be wonderfully enlarged and glorified by Divine grace. He that soweth to the glory of God on this earth shall reap a golden harvest of Divine benedictions on the plains of the upper paradise.

God's Purpose and Man's Opportunity. Verse 14.

Great honours if suddenly achieved are often connected with great perils; and our text has reference to a peril of no common magnitude. The fate of a whole people was, through the success of a wicked plot, trembling in the balance. Humanly speaking, that fate would be settled this way or that according to the impression which Mordecai might make upon Esther's mind. We know that the right impression *was* made, and that the right end *was* attained—the preservation of the Jews, and the destruction of the remorseless man who had plotted theirs.

Now, without putting any pressure on this passage, it is thought that we may find certain principles of Divine administration which are capable of easy and profitable application to our present circumstances. I draw from the text the following general truths:—

That running through the providence of this world, there is a gracious Divine purpose for its ultimate salvation.

That rich and rare opportunities occur in the progress of things, by which believing men are allowed to come effectually "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

That the neglect of such providential calls has a tendency to bring destruction.

That obedience will bring elevation and blessing.

I. Divine purpose. It is very clear that Mordecai rested his faith on some fundamental and changeless purpose of God, in reference to the Jewish people. In fact, he believed in the indestructibility of the Jews; and this with him was evidently a *religious* faith. He believed this, because he believed in God and in his revealed will. There was no natural ground for supposing that they would *not* perish, according to the terms of the bloody edict which had gone forth. They were a captive, a scattered, a feeble people, without mutual concert, without leaders, without power of resistance. The fatal counsel had taken effect on the royal mind.

The ring had passed from the king's hand; the death-letters had been written; the royal seal impressed on each; the posts hastened out of the city away to the different provinces, and the whole land was struck with fear and perplexity by the suddenness and terrific character of the decree. Yet here is a man of the doomed race whose faith lifts him above his fear!—a man who, by simply grasping one great truth, can smile serenely at the portents and terrors of the time. "My people cannot perish!" That is his unwavering faith. Now, that faith must have been founded on one or more of the express promises of God. Thus the purpose of the preservation of the Jews is but a branch and a sign of another and a grander purpose—a purpose to gather and to save the whole world. Always to our severer thought, and in our more perfect frames, this *end* has arisen to our view, like the shining summits of inaccessible mountains which the traveller can never reach, but by which he guides his way; and we have seen and felt that it is wisest, holiest, best, that neither man nor universe can ever come into the place of God; that neither human happiness, nor the universal harmony of things, can ever reach so high, or shine so bright, as the glory of the all-perfect One. In the contemplation of this end, our thought returns unto its rest in the stillness of truth; our affections are imbued most deeply with the harmonies of the everlasting love, and the forces of our life spring up with most gigantic energy. Then we live indeed, for God liveth in us that we may will and do of his good pleasure. The light of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. And this is the "glory of the Lord, which shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." The purpose of God to achieve this grand result is clearly recorded in many parts of his revealed will. Expressed or implied, we find it in every book: it types itself in the kingly history; it gleams in the prophet's vision; it breathes in the holy psalm; speaks out in the *Acts* of the Apostles; runs through all the Epistles, and sighs up to heaven in that last apocalyptic cry, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

II. Human opportunity. We pass now from Divine purpose to human opportunity. There is no need to expound the general doctrine of opportunity. "Our time is alway ready." "We are workers together with God." We must spend the gospel, or lose it. But while, in a general sense, there is always opportunity to every one, God's providence is so cast that now and again opportunities of a richer and rarer kind occur. We have a striking instance of this in the text. No queen in the world but Esther had any chance of doing what Mordecai asks at her hand; only once in *her* life was such a grand possibility and such a dread alternative placed before her. A few moments, probably, settled all. In her quick and grand resolve she made herself a queen indeed! the heroine of a wondrous story! a fountain of salvation to a whole people! mistress and monarch, for the time, of all the earth! And such, often-times, in character and quickness, is *our* opportunity too. Our moral opportunities, our seasonable times for action and usefulness, are very precious, are very brief, and when they are gone they cannot be renewed. God's great purpose will travel on, but our co-operation there is impossible for ever. So, too, it is at times with Churches, with societies, and with nations. A Church grows and prospers for a while, and then comes to a point of spiritual potentiality where her state is tested and her history determined. She *must* at that point either become the city on the hill, or sink back into the shades of obscurity. A nation suffers, and struggles, and grows, and then comes a time—it may be a time of war, or a time of peace, but it is a crucial time to her—and in a few years, perhaps, the scale of the great balance in which she is being held and weighed, *rises*, and she is too light to be further used for God's purposes; or *falls*, and she is settled in her place as one of his great kingdoms on the earth.

III. The law of destruction. "Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and

thy father's house shall be destroyed." "The Jews"—God's people—are *not* dependent, as they seem to be, for their preservation, upon you; there are "other places" from which the deliverance so much needed will *immediately* spring if you are unfaithful, or unequal in any way to the great occasion. But you are dependent for *your* preservation on your loyalty and fealty to them. "Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." We are not sure whether Mordecai himself knew in what manner his prediction would be accomplished. It is probable that it stood out in his view, and in the view of Esther, not so much in the light of a personal and particular penalty which would overtake her and her father's house by what we call a special providence, as in the light of a general principle of retribution, acting at *all* times, but *sure* to act swiftly and terribly in a case like this. That this principle of retribution is still in force cannot for a moment be doubted. It has all the force and fixedness of law. It has its fullest application to the ungodly. The way, the hope, the expectation, the works, the memory, and, saddest of all, the soul of the wicked, shall all perish. But God is no respecter of persons, and neither are his laws. Let a Christian man neglect opportunities, and hold truth in unrighteousness, and bind down his soul to commonness, and what will happen to him? *Can* that man be going on to joyous harvest-time as a Christian should! It is impossible. In fact, he is *perishing* as to the real power of his life. In the main he is living so that this great law of destruction is fastening upon his whole exterior life. More completely still does the principle apply to churches, and societies, and nations. All associations of men, civil and sacred, Church and State alike, are judged by the king *now*. No Church, society, or nation *can* live, except as they continue to be in harmony with the purpose and the providence of God. *The one* Church cannot perish; the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, but they *do* prevail against every particular Church that is unfaithful. Where are the seven Churches in Asia? All darkened and dead. The "lamps" have long since gone out, and can never be relumed. It would be a waste of time to remind you at length how this principle of judgment and destruction has been applied to *nations*. The whole history of this world, rightly read, is but a commentary and a confirmation of the doctrine of destruction which the text contains, No doubt this principle is applied in this our native land. If we are "righteous" we shall be exalted; if we are sinful we shall be disgraced. If we serve God in the line of his purpose for the world's salvation, we shall flourish; if we do not, we and our father's house shall be destroyed.

IV. The law of life. There is a law of *life* in God's gracious providence as well as a law of destruction, and following the beautiful turn given to the sentiment of the text, we say now, "Who knoweth whether we are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" It is possible, even very probable. God does not play capriciously with signs and scenes of Providence. As Englishmen, we have come to a kingdom such as never before was seen among men. The very thought of it is almost overwhelming. To circumscribe the bounds of our empire we must traverse every continent, and sail over every sea. The great Roman empire in its palmiest days was nothing like it. The whole world waits for us—watches what we do, listens to what we say. What a gigantic kingdom! "Who knoweth whether we are come to it for such a time as this?" But as Christians we have come to a greater kingdom still, ruled by the "King of kings." Although not *of* this world, this Kingdom is intensely and unconquerably *in* it. Its principles are rooted beneath the uttermost foundations of society. Opportunity is so quick, possibilities are so great, forces are so strong, and the prospects of the opening future are so enrapturing, but *yet* so dependent on faithfulness in the present hour, that we must be "*ready* for every good work," or lose our function and our peculiar place in the great time on which we have fallen. It *is* a great, a glorious time—"such a time as this!" The gates are lifting up their heads. The everlasting doors are opening. The King himself *is* coming soon. He gives us new commission to herald his

advent, and prepare his way in every land. And looking up to his eternal purpose of love and mercy, observing these rich and high opportunities, fearing the sweep of that law of destruction which carries the wicked and the slothful away; but strong, through grace in the law of life, we venture now to say, not "who knoweth?" but, Lord, *Thou* knowest,—Thou who knowest all things; and we, by the humble yet resolute purpose, which we renew before thy face, and in thy strength to-day. Thou knowest, and we know, that we are "come to the kingdom for such a time as this!" *Amen. — Dr. Raleigh's Sermon for the London Missionary Society. Abridged.*

Suggestive Comments on Verses 13, 14.

Receiving is in order to giving. This is the law of nature. The clouds receive from the sea, and give back fertilizing showers to the earth. The soil receives from the clouds, and responds to the refreshing baptism by waving harvests of golden beauty. We are told that nature never disappoints, and that nothing pays so well as the soil. In some of her aspects nature appears to be hard and unyielding, but in other aspects she shows herself grateful for all kind attentions. This is the law of nations, and in so far as they answer to this law is their continued prosperity secured. When a nation fails to give out noble exertions for the consolidation of virtuous manhood, for the suppression of vice, and for the spread of right principles, then it begins to decline. The youth of a nation is often the most glorious. Then it produces the greatest number of stalwart heroes. Then are found those who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the State. Even then are found the brightest ornaments in literature. The nation is giving. The decline of a nation is marked by this fact, that it is an absorbing power. It rests idly upon former achievements, and does not seek to prosecute further enterprises. Wealth is in abundance. The people absorb, and thus become enervated. This is the law of individuals, and in so far as they obey this law can they hope to reach the true perfection of which they are capable. God gives in order that man may give, and man grows rich by giving. Much has been received. The world itself, with all its exquisite contrivances of infinite wisdom, with all its manifestations of Divine power, and with all its charming displays of loveliness, is God's gift to man. Life, with all its rare privileges, and wonderful opportunities, and glorious possibilities, has been given by the Creator. Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, the noblest ideal of our manhood, the Redeemer of mankind, is the gift of God's unspeakable love. Mercy to pardon, grace to help, and love to cheer, come to us from the loving Father. Much has been received, and it is rightly expected that much shall be returned. "Freely ye have received, freely give." What return shall be made for love so vast? Adequate return cannot be made; but oh! that return were made equal to the ability of each recipient. Oh! what shall be the grateful response to beneficence so unspeakably glorious?

That Divine Providence had an eye to this in bringing her to be queen. "Who knows whether thou hast come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" and therefore, "Thou art bound in gratitude to do this service for God and his Church, else thou dost not answer the end of thy elevation." "Thou needest not fear miscarrying in the enterprise; if God designed thee for it, he will bear thee out and give thee success." Now, it appeared, by the event, that she did come to the kingdom that she might be an instrument of the Jews' deliverance, so that Mordecai was right in the conjecture. Because the Lord loved his people, therefore he made Esther queen. There is a wise counsel and design in all the providences of God, which is unknown to us till it is accomplished, but it will prove in the issue that they are all intended for and centre in the good

of the Church. The probability of this was a good reason why she should bestir herself, and do her utmost for her people. We should every one of us consider for what end God has put us in the place where we are, and study to answer that end; and when any particular opportunity of serving God and our generation offers itself, we must take care that we do not let it slip; for we were entrusted with it that we might improve it.—*Matthew Henry.*

We are apt to mistake our vocation by looking out of the way for occasions to exercise great and rare virtues, and by stepping over the ordinary ones that lie directly in the road before us.—*Hannah More.*

There are not good things enough in life to indemnify us for the neglect of a single duty.—*Mad. Swetchine.*

But if thou altogether holdest thy peace. In a storm at sea it is a shame to sit still, or to be asleep, with Jonah, in the sides of the ship when it is in danger of drowning. Every man cannot sit at the stern; but then he may handle the ropes, or manage the oars, &c. The self-seeker, the private-spirited man, may he be but warm in his own feathers, regards not the danger of the house; he is *totus in se*, like the snail still within-doors and at home; like the squirrel, he ever digs his hole towards the sun-rising; his care is to keep on the warm side of the hedge, to sleep on a whole skin, to save one, whatever become of the many. From doing thus, Mordecai deterreth by a heap of holy arguments; discovering an heroical faith and a well-knit resolution.

At this time.—There is indeed a time to keep silence, and a time to speak (Eccles. iii. 7). But if ever a man will speak, let him do it when the enemies are ready to devour the Church: as Crœsus's dumb son burst out into, Kill not King Crœsus. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest," &c. (Isa. lxii. 1). "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," &c.

That noble Terentius (general to Valens, the Emperor), being bidden to ask what he would, asked nothing but that the Church might be freed from Arians; and when the Emperor, upon a defeat by the Goths, upbraided him with cowardice and sloth as the causes of the overthrow, he boldly replied: "Yourself have lost the day, by your warring against God, and persecuting his people."

But thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.—Here he thundereth, and threateneth her, if to save herself she shall desert the Church. Mordecai's message, like David's ditty, is composed of discords. Sour and sweet make the best sauce; promises and menaces mixed will soonest work. God told Abraham that for the love he bare him he would bless those that blessed him, and curse such as cursed him. Their sin should find them out, and they should rue it in their posterity As one fire, so one fear, should drive out another.

And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom?—There is often a wheel within a wheel. God may have an end and an aim in businesses that we wot not of nor can see into till events have explained it. Let us lay forth ourselves for him, and labour to be public-spirited, standing on tiptoes, as St. Paul did, to see which way we may most glorify God, and gratify our brethren.—*Trapp.*

Mordecai manifests a precious sense of trust: "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place." But he who would save his soul shall lose it. The risk which Mordecai called upon Esther to assume, that she should come to the king uninvited, and manifest herself as a daughter of the people thus devoted to destruction, was indeed great and important. Moreover, the hope that Xerxes would recall his edict, thus, according to Persian ideas, endangering the respect due to his royal majesty, and likewise abandoning his favourite minister, was very uncertain of fulfilment. But Esther had been elevated to a high position. Mordecai, who in a doubting manner sends her word. "Who knoweth whether

thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" doubtless did it from a conviction that she must now prove herself worthy of such distinction, if she would retain it. He also conveys the idea that the higher her position the greater her responsibility, and consequently, in case of failure because of carelessness or fearfulness, the more intense her guilt. In these convictions of Mordecai are contained the most earnest exhortations even for us. This is especially true since we are all called to be joint heirs of Jesus Christ to the throne of the heavenly kingdom. In the deportment of Esther a no less reminder is contained. It appears quite natural that Esther should order a fast, not only to be observed by Mordecai and the rest of the Jews, but she also imposed on herself this fast of three days' duration. Had she had a little more of the common discretion of her sex, she would have feared the effects of the fast upon her appearance. Hence she would have adopted quite a different plan or preparation previous to her entrance into the king's presence. Here also she reveals the same attractive feature of mind and manner as when she was first presented to the king. Instead of placing reliance upon what she should externally put on or adorn herself with, we find her trust placed upon something higher. She well knows that she will only succeed if the great and exalted Lord be for her; who, notwithstanding his glorious majesty, yet dwells among the most lowly of men. It is in just such times as these, when we are raised to the greatest endeavours and self-sacrifices, that we must not expect to accomplish these things by our own power, but only through him who in our weakness is our strength. Otherwise, despite our best intentions and most successful beginnings, we shall soon grow discouraged, and fail. Our own weakness is but too often made manifest to our eyes. It is only when we consider and remember that the hand of the Lord is in it all, that we will be saved from a lack of courage.—*Lange.*

These were, indeed, times for the development of character—times for the birth of men. And the men were there;—the wit, the poet, the divine, the hero—as if genius had brought out her jewels, and furnished them nobly for a nation's need. Then Pym and Hampden bearded tyranny, and Russel and Sydney dreamed of freedom. Then Blake secured the empire of ocean, and the chivalric Falkland fought and fell. In those stirring times Charnock, and Owen, and Howe, and Henry, and Baxter, wrote, and preached, and prayed. "Cudworth and Henry More were still living at Cambridge; South was at Oxford, Prideaux in the Close at Norwich, and Whitby in the Close of Salisbury. Sherlock preached at the Temple, Tillotson at Lincoln's Inn, Burnet at the Rolls, Stillingfleet at St. Paul's Cathedral, Beveridge at St. Peter's, Cornhill. Men," to continue the historian's eloquent description, "who could set forth the majesty and beauty of Christianity with such justness of thought and such energy of language that the indolent Charles roused himself to listen, and the fastidious Buckingham forgot to sneer." But twelve years before the birth of Bunyan, all that was mortal of Shakespeare had descended to the tomb. Waller still flourished, an easy and graceful versifier; Cowley yet presented his "perverse metaphysics" to the world; Butler, like the parsons in his own 'Hudibras,'—

> "Proved his doctrine orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks."

Dryden wrote powerful satires and sorry plays "with long-resounding march and energy divine;" George Herbert clad his thoughts in quaint and quiet beauty; and, mid the groves of Chalfont, as if blinded on purpose that the inner eye might be flooded with the "light which never was on sea or shore," our greater Milton sang.—*Punshon.*

O the admirable faith of Mordecai that shines through all these clouds, and in the thickest of these fogs descries a cheerful glimpse of deliverance! He saw the day of their common destruction enacted; he knew the Persian decrees to be unalterable; but, withal, he knew there was a Messiah to come; he was so well acquainted with God's covenanted

assurances to his Church that he can, through the midst of those bloody resolutions, foresee indemnity to Israel, rather trusting the promises of God than the threats of men. This is the victory that overcomes all the fears and fury of the world, even our faith.—*Bishop Hall.*

There shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.—O the power of faith! What has it not done!—what can it not do! It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It lifts the person above the level of his own mind. It can not only see abundance of rain in a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but it can prophesy of it, when the heavens above are as burnished brass. The faith of God's elect has removed mountains — not literally — but mountains of difficulties, and mountains of guilt lying on the conscience, and cast them into the sea; dissipated clouds—not the visible clouds — but clouds of despair which oppress the soul; and dried up fountains—not the fountains of the deep—but the fountains of tears in the heart, which flowed day and night for the slain of the daughter of Zion! Witness its effects on Mordecai. How changed is he from the figure in which we saw him lately. He has shaken the dust from his head, his filthy garments he has exchanged for raiment far surpassing that which the queen had sent him; and the wailings with which he filled the streets of Shushan have been converted into strains of hope and triumph. It is faith—recovered faith—which has set his feet upon a rock, and placed him in a pavilion, from the top of which he looks down with derision on the malice and power and expectation of his enemy, and with compassion on his timid, distracted daughter, whom he alternately chides and comforts.

But what is this faith which produces such astonishing effects? Is it just strong confidence, or a persuasion that what we believe will take place? It has a more solid foundation than this. There is confidence in it, sometimes rising to full assurance, but the word of the immutable God is the base on which the pillar of faith rests — confidence, the spiral top with which it seeks the skies. On what then did the faith of Mordecai rest? On the promises of God, who "is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it?—or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Thou art come to the kingdom—to a crown, to a throne, and in what a wonderful manner! Surely it becomes you to say, with greater reason than David, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" And to add, with the same godly king, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?" Born a captive, early left an orphan, lately the reputed daughter of a porter, Providence hath raised thee beyond all men's expectation, and of none more than your own, to be the second person in the greatest monarchy of the world. Art thou not then bound in gratitude to do this service for God and his Church?

And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?—It is possible; it is highly probable. The singular way of thy elevation, and the striking conjunction of circumstances, point to this, and seem to say, Because the Lord loved his people, therefore he made Esther queen, that by her influence with the king she might defeat the wicked plot for their destruction. The very probability of this was a strong incitement to her to bestir herself; for if God had destined her to be the deliverer of Israel, then he would be with her, and give success to her exertions, and this would be an honour greater than the matrimonial crown of Persia; for "henceforth all generations would call her blessed."

The event showed that Mordecai was right in his conjecture, and that he had correctly interpreted the ways of Providence. There is a wise counsel and design in all the works of him who sees the end from the beginning. It often is unknown to us until it is carried into effect, though we might know more of it if we were more diligent students of

Providence; and the issue proves, that all was intended for, and conduces to, the good of the Church. We should seek to be "workers together with God," and carefully consider for what end he hath put us into the place which we occupy. Have any rank, or authority, or talents, or wealth, or friends? These are the gifts of God, and must be used for his glory. When any special opportunity of serving God and our generation presents itself, we should beware of letting it slip, or excusing ourselves; for an account will be exacted of us, and exacted with impartiality. Of them to whom much is given much shall be required. Every one hath it in his power to do something. "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" And we should "provoke one another," by our example and our advice, "to love and to good works."—*McCree.*

This lesson may be drawn from his conduct,—that a resolute will, when it is exerted for the accomplishment of any purpose, is usually successful in the end. In the pursuit even of worldly good, when a man keeps his eye steadily fixed upon some one object, and makes that the point towards which his efforts directly and indirectly tend, he commonly succeeds. There are, indeed, providential interpositions which overthrow the most promising and best-laid schemes, and show the insufficiency of human wisdom and power to effect their ends, apart from the blessing of God. But generally, when there is no impious disregard of the order of Providence—a resolute will, combined with activity, sweeps all difficulties out of its path, and succeeds in accomplishing its aims. Some of the greatest movements in worldly affairs are, humanly speaking, to be traced up to this. The triumphs of the Reformation for example, in our own country and in other lands, where it did triumph, while they are really to be ascribed to the overruling providence of God, are instrumentally to be attributed to this, that God raised up and qualified for the work certain men of determined will and unflagging energy, who kept before them the great purpose which they sought to effect, and would be turned aside by no danger or difficulty from working it out. And I would remark, that in things spiritual—in things affecting the eternal salvation of man—resoluteness of will and indomitable energy are as indispensable as in the pursuit of temporal good. Nothing must be allowed to obscure the great cardinal truth, that salvation is of grace, and that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy." But still, it is only when men, by the grace of God, set themselves resolutely to contend with their spiritual enemies—when, looking to God for help, they will not be driven from the path of well-doing by obstacles which they meet with in pursuing it; it is only then that they are treading the course which will terminate in the rewards of a glorious victory.—*Davidson.*

Ver. 14. "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Their great trouble, their deep distress, and their most deadly danger you have in that (Esther iii. 13). "And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey." Here are great aggravations of his cruelty, in that neither sex nor age are spared: rage and malice know no bounds. Haman, that grand informer, with his wicked crew, would have spoiled them of their lives and goods, but that they were prevented by a miraculous providence, as you know. Now in this deep distress and most deadly danger, at what rate doth Mordecai believe? For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement—(Heb. respiration)—and deliverance arise—(Heb. stand up, as on its basis or bottom, so as none shall be able to with stand it). This Mordecai speaketh not

by a spirit of prophecy, but by the power and force of his faith, grounded upon the precious promises of God's defending his Church, hearing the cries of his people arising for their relief and succour, and grounded upon all the glorious attributes of God, viz. his power, love, wisdom, goodness, and all-sufficiency, &c.—all which are engaged in the covenant of grace, to save, protect, and secure his people in their greatest troubles and most deadly dangers. Mordecai's faith in this black, dark, dismal day, was a notable faith indeed, and worthy of highest commendation. Faith can look through the perspective of the promises, and see deliverance at a great distance, salvation at the door. What though sense saith, Deliverance cannot come; yet a raised faith gets above all fears and disputes, and says, Deliverance will certainly come; redemption is at hand.

The Rabbins put Makom, which signifies place, among the names of God. Bythner brings them in expounding that text in Esther, "Deliverance shall arise from another place;" that is, from God. They called him Place, because he is in every place, though in the assemblies of his saints more eminently and gloriously. God is present with all his creatures—(1) *viâ productionis*, by raising them up; (2) *viâ sustentationis*, by staying of them up; they are his family, and he feeds and clothes them; (3) *viâ inclinationis*, by giving unto them power of motion; man could neither live nor move unless the Lord were with him; (4) *viâ observationis*, by taking notice of them; he observeth and marks both their persons and their actions—he sees who they are and how they are employed; (5) *viâ ordinationis*, by governing and ruling of them and all their actions, to the service of his glory, and the good of his poor people.—*Brookes.*

Consider all the capacities and abilities we have to do good, this way and that way, in this relation and that relation, that we may be trees of righteousness, that the more we bear the more we may bear. God will mend his own trees. He will purge them and prune them to "bring forth more fruit." God cherisheth fruitful trees. In the law of Moses, when they besieged any place, he commanded them to spare fruitful trees. God spares a fruitful person till he have done his work. We know not how much good one man may do, though he be a mean person. Sometimes one poor wise man delivereth the city; and the righteous delivereth the land. We see for one servant, Joseph, Potiphar's house was blessed. Naaman had a poor maid-servant that was the occasion of his conversion. Grace will set anybody a-work. It puts a dexterity into any, though never so mean. They carry God's blessing wheresoever they go, and they bethink themselves when they are in any condition to do good, as he saith in Esther iv. 14. "God hath called me to this place, perhaps for this end." We should often put this *quære* to ourselves, Why hath God called me to this place? —for such and such a purpose.—*Sibbes.*

As it is the most pleasing worship to God to support the Church with all our strength, so he execrates no one more than him who withholds from the Church when in danger that help which he is able to render. . . . If the cry of a single poor man is so availing, that although unheard by man it finds an avenging ear in God, what must be the influence of the cry of the whole Church in her affliction imploring assistance from him who it hopes is able to help? . . . This teaches us that God confers power upon princes, riches upon the rich, wisdom upon the wise, and other gifts upon others, not that they may abuse them for their own pleasure, but that they may assist the Church of God, and protect it whatever way they can. For the Church on earth is so great in the eyes of God, that he requires of all men whatever may serve her. "The people," he says, "and the king that will not serve thee shall perish, and the nations shall dwell in a solitary place."—*Brenz.*

"Think not that because thou art in the king's house, thou shalt be safe."—It is vain to trust in kings, or in the sons of men, in whom there is no confidence. Kings die. In that day their breath goes forth, and their thoughts perish. Kings are changeable creatures, like other men. The kings were not like the laws

of the Medes and Persians, which could not be altered. He that was in the morning their favourite, might, before the evening, be hanged by their orders. Herod, king of Judea, dearly loved his wife Mariamne, and yet he ordered her to be put to death without any crime but what was committed in his own dark imagination. Monema was a beloved wife of Mithridates the great King of Pontus, and yet, when he lost a battle against the Romans, that she might not fall into other hands than his own he commanded her to die; and the only favour he showed her was to give her the choice of her own death. Her choice was, to strangle herself by her royal tiara, which had long been hateful to her. But even in this she was disappointed, and her last, or nearly her last, words, were, "Poor bauble! canst thou not do me even this mournful office?"

Jesus forbids us to fear them that have power only to kill the body. Still less, if possible, are we to trust them; for they have no power even to save the body. God is to be trusted and feared. He is the lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy.

Enlargement and deliverance will arise to the Jews, to the Israel of God, under the gospel, as well as under the law. Amidst all the distresses of the Church, we may rest assured that she cannot perish. Particular Churches may be destroyed, but the Church universal is built by Christ upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. —*Lawson.*

Ver. 14. When God vouchsafes his children any outward privileges, he doth it for the good and help of others. Paul had these privileges, that he might beat down the pride of the Jews more powerfully. And Solomon had all abundance of wisdom, riches, and the like. Why? But only that he might without control judge of all, as of "vanity and vexation of spirit;" and make it to be believed more firmly. For had an ordinary man said it, men would have thought it easy for him to say so; but if he had tried them, he would have been otherwise minded. In these later times, our best teachers were at the first Papists, and of the more zealous sort; as Bucer and Luther, being also learned men; as also Peter Martyr and Zanchius, were brought up in Italy; and all this, that they seeing once their blindness, might be the more able to confound them, as being not a whit inferior to them in any outward respect whatsoever, when they were of their belief.—*Sibbes.*

God never yet suffered any Goliath to defy him, but he raised up a David to encounter him. "The same day Pelagius was born here in Britain, Augustine was born in Africa." Though error, like Esau, hath come out first, yet truth, like Jacob, hath caught it by the heel, and wrestled with it. If God hath suffered any horn to push at his Israel, he hath presently raised a carpenter to knock it off.—*Simeon Ash.*

Things all serve their uses, and never break out of their place. They have no power to do it. Not so with us. We are able, as free beings, to refuse the place and the duties God appoints; which, if we do, then we sink into something lower and less worthy of us. That highest and best condition for which God designed us is no more possible. We are fallen out of it, and it cannot be wholly recovered. And, yet, as that was the best thing possible for us in the reach of God's original counsel, so there is a place designed for us now which is the next best possible. God calls us now to the best thing left, and will do so till all good possibility is narrowed down and spent. And then, when he cannot use us any more for our own good, he will use us for the good of others,—an example of the misery and horrible desperation to which any soul must come, when all the good ends and all the holy callings of God's friendly and fatherly purposes are exhausted. Or, it may be now that, remitting all other plans and purposes in our behalf, he will henceforth use us, wholly against our will, to be the demonstration of his justice and avenging power before the eyes of mankind; saying over us, as he did over Pharaoh in the day of his judgments, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all

the earth." Doubtless, he had other and more genial plans to serve in this bad man, if only he could have accepted such; but, knowing his certain rejection of these, God turned his mighty counsel in him wholly on the use to be made of him as a reprobate. How many Pharaohs in common life refuse every other use God will make of them, choosing only to figure, in their small way, as reprobates; and descending, in that manner, to a fate that painfully mimics his. God has, then, a definite life-plan set for every man; one that, being accepted and followed, will conduct him to the best and noblest end possible. No qualification of this doctrine is needed, save the fearful one just named, that we, by our perversity, so often refuse to take the place and do the work he gives us.—*Bushnell.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 15, 16.

A WOMAN'S HEROISM.

A woman, through the delicacy of her constitution and the timidity appropriate to her nature, at first shrinks from the performance of some difficult and dangerous enterprise. Yet when the voice of stern duty calls, when the demands of affection prompt, she shows herself the most heroic of beings. Much has been said, and not too much, about the heroism of woman. A great deal has been sung and written about her heroism. There are also unwritten records of womanly heroism. She has suffered very much in the darkness, in silence, and in obscurity. Not the one half has been told of her heroic glory. While we applaud the heroism of Esther and others whose good deeds have been celebrated in song, let us not forget those whose good deeds are unsung. Esther was no heartless beauty intent on her own elevation, and regardless of the welfare of others. If there is anything repellant in this world it is a beautiful woman that possesses either a heart of stone or a spirit steeped in selfishness. If there is anything attractive in this world it is a maiden the loveliness of whose outward form is but the beautiful casket of a still more lovely soul. How touching to watch the fair maiden meditating with patriotic heart upon the sorrows of her people, and the dangers that threaten her nationality. There is refreshing fragrance in the very sighs that come from her heaving breast. There is healing anodyne in the tears that fall like jewels from those eyes that rain sweet influences. There is vast encouragement in the prayers that ascend from her lips to heaven. The world is bright; we may welcome danger itself, and be the better prepared for calamity, as we see the Esthers of time nobly resolving to step into the places of danger, and undertake the works of deliverance. Esther's heroism then was of the noblest type. She was truly heroic. Let us examine her claims to this character.

I. **The greatness of Esther's heroism is shown by her wisdom.** Wisdom has been defined to be the use of the best means for attaining the best ends, and in this sense implies the union of high mental and moral excellence. Such a glorious union is manifested in the answer here returned by Esther to Mordecai, and also in the conduct of Esther when she comes to put her well-concerted schemes into operation. A woman's heroism is a grand elevating power. She becomes almost supernatural by the sharpness of her vision, by the quickness of her judgment, by the depth of her wisdom, by the far-reaching nature of her schemes, and by her wondrous skill, and tact, and fertility in the devising of the best means for attaining her ends. What a thrilling history is the history of the expedients devised by heroic women! Talk we of the diplomacy of statesmen, let us talk of the better diplomacy of women devoted to the accomplishment of noble enterprises. Talk we of the skilful arrangements of mighty conquerors, let us talk rather of the arrangements of those women who conquer by the inspiration of heroic daring and heroic consecration. Talk we of the far-reaching and well-devised methods of

scientific men. This we may do, and yet we must feel that great praise is due as we consider the well-devised methods of unscientific but devoted and lofty-souled women.

II. Esther's wisdom is here shown by her recognition of the fact that Divine duties are superior to human laws. "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the laws." Law is a rule of action. It is the formulated expression of one who has a right to command obedience. Kings have a right to command obedience. Subjects however have their rights. And the first rights of a well-regulated and conscientious subject are entitled to respect, and may well dispute the so-called rights of kings; rights that are not based on principles of moral rectitude. There is a power more kingly than that of earthly kings. The Divine law is superior to the human law, and is the true rule of action. All human laws should be in harmony with Divine laws. The voice of conscience is supreme. The voice of earthly legislators is subordinate. "We ought to obey God rather than man." The voice, however, must be the clear, ringing, commanding voice of an enlightened conscience. Cautions must be laid down for fear the rule obtains—so many men so many consciences. The voice of caprice, of prejudice, or of mere self-will may be taken for the voice of conscience. The supposed voice of conscience may tell us to tithe the mint, the anise, and the cummin only; while the true voice commands the observance also of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. The voice of conscience may say, Follow the inner light. Sit in silence and wait for the motions of the Holy Spirit. The true voice proclaims in high places, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them?" If then the voice of conscience and the voice of human institutions oppose one another, we must listen so as to catch the deciding voice of the Divine words. If we cannot clearly discern the message of that voice, we must, like Esther, give ourselves to fasting and to prayer, and God will cause the voice of his own word to ring out more distinctly. Esther's duty in this case was clear, and she showed herself equal to the occasion. There are many cases in life when our duty is clear. Difficulties must not be created as an excuse for cowardice.

III. Esther's heroism and wisdom are here shown by her recognition of the truth that Divine duties must be undertaken in a spirit of self-abnegation. No great work can be successfully accomplished without self-denial. The way to riches, to fame, or to power is in some aspects the way of self-denial. If a man is to be a successful orator he must have the power of self-forgetfulness in the presence of his hearers. This self-forgetfulness is to be obtained by self-denial, by thorough absorption in the subject, and by earnest desire to do good. What is true then of Divine duties is true of what may be called human duties. The one lies on the same plane with the other in so far. Self-denial in the pathway of human duty does not always meet with its appropriate reward. Self-denial in the pathway of Divine duty is never without its harvest. Esther's self-denial was rewarded. It is a very cheap way of getting glory to say "If I perish, I perish" when there is not the slightest chance of perishing. Some people are remarkably heroic when there is no apparent danger. There was danger in Esther's case. There is a sad tone in the declaration "If I perish, I perish," and the sadness is not without its warrant. These words however are not the words of despair. They are the words of one resigned to the Divine will, of one willing to suffer, and yet the words of one who still has hope in Divine protection. If Esther had lived in our day a certain class of companions would have told her not to mind old Mordecai, and let the Jews take their chance. She heeded not such seductive voices. Esther doubtless valued her life; she was not indifferent to the flattering nature of her prospects. She would not wish to be typified by Moses who was taken up to the Mount of Vision in order to see the promised land, and then die without entering into possession. Still she may also have felt that better than the treasure of a Persian palace

is the treasure of a good conscience; better than the life of the body is the life of the soul; better than the glory of a royal position is the glory of self-denial for the good of others. In these words we may find, by no great stretch of imagination, a foreshadowing of that spirit displayed by Christ Jesus, by his apostles, by the martyrs, and by the noble workers of all time. The spirit of him who "pleased not himself," who had a perfect self-surrender, and a complete submission to the Divine will, who bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows, finds embodiment and utterance in the words, "If I perish, I perish." The spirit of Esther in this passage indicates the spirit of that noble apostle who counted not his life dear unto him that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus. It was the spirit of those who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer such things for his name's sake. It is the spirit of all in every age of the world who are willing to suffer for the good of humanity. Are we prepared at the call of duty and in obedience to the voice of conscience to suffer?

IV. Esther's wisdom is shown in her recognition of the truth that **Divine duties may be undertaken in dependence upon human co-operation.** We may be workers together with God. We may be workers together with one another for the promotion of Divine plans. Those who have to undertake a special Divine mission may be helped by the sympathies and the prayers of others who are not so directly and specially appointed. The minister by his people. The missionary by those who stay at home. Esther by all the praying Jews in Shushan. Co-operation is good in commercial matters. Co-operation is also good in Divine commerce. Let us take the word that speaks of material affairs, that summons up the laws of political economy, and so put its principle to use in things spiritual, that it may become lifted into higher spheres, and clothed with a grander significance. Some people have a one-sided idea of co-operation, especially when any great work is to be done, and when any great sacrifice is to be made. They forget that Co. means two or more. Esther had the true idea of co-operation. She not only asks Mordecai and all the Jews present in Shushan to fast, but she says, "I also and my maidens will fast likewise." There were two sides to this co-operation. Esther and her maids would join with all the Jews in Shushan, in order to bring about a successful result. The Church of to-day needs more co-operation. The minister, for instance, is to go on a difficult mission; he is to fast, and to pray, and to visit, and to be self-denying. All right if it can be secured. Something more is required. True co-operation is needed. The rich member must say, I also will fast, and pray, and give, and work likewise.

V. Esther's wisdom is shown in the recognition of the truth that **Divine duties can only be successfully undertaken by Divine help.** It is vain to make an objection to the Book of Esther on the ground that there is not in it the religious spirit. There can be no point in fasting if it is not connected with religion. This request for a general fast, and this determination on her own part to fast, must have meant an appeal to God for help. Fasting and prayer were very generally joined in the Old Testament writings. In the Book of Joel it is said, "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord!" Mere abstinence from food can be of little service. We may reasonably picture Mordecai carrying out Esther's request, and calling the Jews together to a solemn assembly, and proclaiming a general fast, and national humiliation before God, and earnest prayer to God for success to Esther in her mission. In these modern days we do not believe in fasting. This may be a reaction. It may be a consequence of our objection to those who carry the principle of torturing the body to an extreme. It may, however, be a growth of the luxury of the present times. There is not much disposition now-a-days to keep the body under and bring it into subjection. We have need, however, of deep humiliation before God. The disasters in the nation, the decline of spiritual life in the

Church, call for humiliation. There can be no success without Divine help. We must call mightily unto God. Let us give him no rest until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Here learn the ennobling, transforming, and creating power of love. Esther's love to her people was strong. This love was a growth from the love she had to God. Let there be love to God, and this will increase all lower loves. True love seeks the enlargement of opportunities; and becomes creative in its very intensity. The loyal and patriotic subject does not strive to pare down the demands of his sovereign. The loving child does not endeavour to strip the father's word of all binding force by skilful manipulations. And the true heart does not inquire, How can I do the very least for my God?—but thinks that the very greatest it can either do or offer is far too little. Oh for a love which, though it has only two mites to give, yet casts them into the treasury of him unto whom belongeth both the gold, the silver and the copper! Oh for a love which takes the alabaster box of ointment—very precious,—and breaks it over the Saviour's head in loving consecration to his predestined offering! Oh for a love which, though it has only tears to give, yet pours them in plentiful measure on the Saviour's feet, and with the rich tresses of a head, full of grateful thoughts, wipes the tear-bedewed feet of Immanuel!

Suggestive Comments on Verses 15, 16.

There is something well worthy of remark in the concluding words of Esther: "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law; and if I perish, I perish." This is not the resolution of a fatalist, who acts upon the principle, that what is destined to be must be, and that therefore it is useless either to attempt to ward off evils, or to complain when they have been inflicted. Neither is it the resolution of a person wrought up to a state of absolute desperation, and acting under the impulse of the feeling —"matters cannot be worse, and to have done the utmost may bring relief, while it cannot possibly aggravate the evil." Neither is it the resolution of a person prostrated under difficulties, and yet, with a vague hope of deliverance, saying, "I will make one effort more, and if that fail, and all is lost, I can but die." Esther's purpose was framed in a spirit altogether different from that of any of those persons, although her language appears to be almost the same as they would have used. And there is an actual case recorded in the Scriptures which illustrates the difference. When Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, and the people were dying of famine within the walls, four leprous men, that had their dwelling without the wall, said to one another: "If we enter into the city, famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live: and if they kill us, we shall but die." Here we have men reduced to a state of utter recklessness by suffering, from which, if they did not obtain immediate relief, they must inevitably perish in one way or other, and so they adopted the only course which presented the possibility of relief. But in the case of Esther, we have neither fatalism, nor desperation, nor the listlessness of waning hope, which says, "It matters not what I do." Hers is the heroism of true piety, which, in Providence shut up to one course, and that full of danger, counts the cost, seeks help of God, and calmly braves the danger, saying: "He will deliver me if he hath pleasure in me; if not, I perish in the path of duty." Her noble resolution entitles her to a place among the most eminent of those who wrought out deliverances for Israel.

And now, in conclusion, have not her words peculiar significance when applied to the case of those who, under the burden of their sin, are afraid to come to Christ lest he reject them? Some such we have known. There may be some of them here. Do you feel that you are lost? Do you acknowledge that Christ might justly throw you off, even were

you to cast yourself upon his mercy? And are you now almost without hope? Still we say, his invitations are addressed to sinners, and none need them more than you. You are lost without him: then make the great effort to lay hold of him. Job said: "Though he slay me I will trust in him." You may say: "If I perish I perish, but it shall be at the foot of the cross, looking to Jesus." And I can tell you, my friends, that none ever perished there, putting all their trust in the Lamb of God. Amen.—*Davidson.*

Gospel-consecration does not go farther than this. Everything dear and valued was left behind in order that she might serve God. "All things were counted but loss" that she might maintain "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." Ah! how this believer, in olden times, when as yet the Saviour was only had in promise, puts to shame many in these latter days who are in possession of the finished salvation! Even the pleasures of sense, and the wealth and rewards of the world, keep them in a state of indecision and vacillation, if not of absolute indifference, to the call and claims of the gospel. They will only go as far with God and his people as it may serve their own selfish ends, and promote their own selfish interests. Self-denial and self-surrender are not words to be found in their vocabulary. But let there be no mistake here. The spirit displayed by Esther is the spirit demanded by the Saviour, and without which we cannot be his disciples. You may not be called upon actually to make the sacrifice, but you cannot dispense with the spirit of readiness to do it. Yea, it must have been already done in spirit, as though in preparation for its actual execution. For the love of Christ, the glory of his name, and allegiance to his crown, we must have laid the world at his feet, and consecrated our life to his service. What were the words which he addressed to the multitudes who went after him? Are they not "hard sayings" when spoken in the midst of his people still? "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

It may be that you may fall at the post of duty. You have no security against this contingency. The graves of many faithful servants of Christ, at home and abroad, bear testimony to that. But are not the men, who prefer rather to perish at the post of duty than have life prolonged, with a sense of desertion, counted worthy of double honour? The soldier who has kept a perilous position in the field of battle, and has chosen rather to fall than flee; the captain who has gone down with his ship in his anxiety and efforts to save others; and the Christian who has regard to the future rather than to the present, can best afford to sink the life that now is in the life which is to come. The apostles, martyrs, and confessors, who have fallen at the post of duty, shall have no cause to regret their fidelity in heaven. They shall, in consequence, have a more richly jewelled crown, and shine forth in the kingdom with a brighter, fuller glory. And oh! if there should yet come upon the Church dark and cloudy days, when the spirit of persecution and hostility to the people of God, which is not dead but only slumbering, shall again be awakened to try the faith of men and prove their steadfastness, whether in our own times or the times of our children, or children's children, the loss and shame will be theirs who forsake the standard of the Cross, but the honour and recompense be in store for them who are "faithful unto death"—loss and shame to those who will only be able to say on that day "we feared and fled," but honour and recompense to such as will be able to declare "we loved Thee, Lord, more than life; we fought and fell." So, in the spirit of Esther, let us go forward in the path of duty and religion through difficulty, danger, and the fear of death. God will shield us if it is for the good of his Church and his own glory, and "if we perish, we perish."

There is one other reference of the words which, though obvious, we would

not overlook. There are some who deem themselves too sinful to be saved; some whose cup of iniquity is indeed well-nigh full, and who, when aroused to a sense of it, are overwhelmed with terror. What must they do? Whither must they betake themselves? We are not surprised though they should try reformation, for where there is true repentance there will always be renunciation of sin. But let the sinner be in the very agonies of dying, pressed down under the tremendous load of high-handed transgression, and having no time left for reformation of life, what must he do? whither betake himself? We have to announce to him the great truth that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and that "him that cometh unto God through him shall in no wise be cast out." And with these Scriptures syllabled in his ears and lodged in his heart, we have no difficulty in telling him what he must do, and whither he must betake himself. He must go in unto the King—not one whose wrath he has to dread, but in whose redeeming love he has to confide; not waiting till he is better, but urged by the desperateness of his case to instant action, and throw himself in all his conscious helplessness on his mercy. O no! There is no hope, no help, no remedy, no refuge for you, but this. Look where you will, try what experiment you may, everything else will be in vain. Your darkness and despair will only be deepened apart from this. But go in unto the King, and even though your darkness be as midnight, there shall gleam forth a star of hope; and though your despair be even as death, there shall be awakened in you the pulsations of a new life. You must perish if you do not. You can but perish if you do. So let your resolve be that of Esther, and Jesus will bid you a cordial and happy welcome. "I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish."—*McEwan.*

Go gather together all the Jews.—Great is the power of joint prayer; it stirs heaven and works wonders. Oh, when a Church full of good people shall set sides and shoulders to work, when they shall rouse up themselves and wrestle with God, when the pillars of incense shall come up into his presence, and their voices be heard as the voices of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder (Rev. xiv. 2), what may such thundering legions have at God's hands! Have it they will: Cœlum tundimus, preces fundimus, misericordiam extorquemus, said those primitive prayer-makers (Rev. ix. 13); the prayers of the saints from the four corners of the earth sound, and do great things in the world; they make it ring. It was the speech of a learned man, If there but one sigh come from a gracious heart (how much more, then, a volley of sighs from many good hearts together!) it filleth the ears of God, so that God heareth nothing else.

I also and my maids will fast.—She herself would be at the head of them, as Queen Elizabeth also told her soldiers at Tilbury camp for their comfort; and a Cæsar used say to his soldiers, Go we, and not Go ye—non ite, sed eamus; and as Joshua said, I and my house will serve Jehovah (Josh. xxiv. 15). Esther's maids must fast—must fast and pray—or they are no maids for her.—*Trapp.*

"Every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own."—*Shakespeare.*

Heroical thoughts do well befit great actions. Life can never be better adventured than when it shall be gain to lose it. There can be no law against the humble deprecation of evils: where the necessity of God's Church calls to us, no danger should withhold us from honest means of relief. Deep humiliation must make way for the success of great enterprises: We are most capable of mercy when we are thoroughly empty. A short hunger doth but whet the appetite; but so long an abstinence meets death half way, to prevent it. Well may they enjoin sharp penances unto others who practise it upon themselves. It was the face of Esther that must hope to win Ahasuerus; yet that shall be macerated with fasting that she may prevail. A careful heart would have pampered the flesh that it might allure those wanton eyes; she pines it that she may please. God, and not she,

must work the heart of the king. Faith teaches her rather to trust her devotions than her beauty.—*Bishop Hall.*

A well-known author once wrote a very pretty essay on the power of education to beautify. That it absolutely chiselled the features; that he had seen many a clumsy nose and thick pair of lips so modified by that awakening and active sentiment as to be unrecognizable. And he put it on that ground that we so often see people, homely and unattractive in youth, bloom in middle life into a softened Indian summer of good looks and mellow tones. Secular education may do a great deal; but sacred education will do vastly more. The true beautifying power for woman is the gospel, is that principle of benevolence which it ever infuses. How nobly beautiful, as well as grandly heroic, must Esther have now appeared as she resolves to save her people at the expense of her own life if need be.

It is with him as with Esther in her undertaking for the Jews. If she should go, and the king not hold forth the golden sceptre to her, she was but a dead woman; but then if she did not go there was no other way to save her and her nation from ruin, and therefore she resolves, "I will go in unto the king, and if I perish I perish:" so here, if I go to Christ (thinks the trembling sinner), and take sanctuary in him, it may be justice may pursue me thither. Oh! but if I go not, then there is nothing for me but certain destruction; thereupon he resolves, I will go to Christ, I will lay hold on him, and if I perish I will perish there; if wrath seize on me, it shall find me in the arms of Christ; if I die, I will die at his feet. When Joab had fled for refuge to the tabernacle, and caught hold of the horns of the altar, Benaiah, sent to execute him, bids him leave his sanctuary: "Thus says the king, come forth." "Nay," says Joab, "but I will die here;" if there be no mercy for me, no remedy but I must die, I will die here. Says also the believing soul, but if I must die, I will die here; if justice smite me it shall smite me with Christ in my arms; though he kill me, yet will I rely on him; here will I live or here will I die; I will not quit my hold, though I die for it.—*Clarkson.*

The bloody plot being thus laid by Haman, the king's minion, behold the footsteps of God's favourable signal, and eminent presence for his people and with his people in their deadly dangers, and that in raising up in them a very great spirit of faith, prayer, and mourning, and by raising an undaunted courage and resolution in Esther: "And so I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish" (Esther iv. 16). This she speaks not rashly or desperately, as prodigal of her life, but as one willing to sacrifice the same for the honour of God, his cause and people, saying, as that martyr, "Can I die but once for Christ?" Esther had rather die than shrink from her duty. She thought it better to do worthily and perish for a kingdom, than unworthily and perish with a kingdom. Here was a mighty preference of God in raising Esther's heroical courage and resolution above all those visible dangers that did attend her attempt of going in to the king against the known law of the land.—*Brooks.*

Behold us willing to suffer in this life the worst it may please thee to bring upon us; here lay thy rod upon us; consume us here, cut us to pieces here, only spare us in eternity!—*St. Augustine.*

The heroic response of Esther might well send her foster-father home content. It was the full reward of all his care in years gone by to have a daughter worthy of Abigail, and Ruth, and Deborah, and Hannah. She would not act on impulse, but came to a resolution which was not to be put in force for three days. It is an advantage to any one, more to a woman than to a man, to move forward rapidly on the wave of a warm impulse; but she relinquished that advantage, and looked steadily at the worst issue. "If I perish, I perish." Her resolution was humble and prayerful. Let those who will, despise prayer-meetings and special requests; remembering the young men of Babylon, and the company in the upper room before Pentecost, believers can afford to sit easy under the world's scorn. "Fast

ye for me: I also and my maids will fast likewise."

That was the secret of Esther's heroism. When the third day came she put on her royal apparel, and did not appear unto men to fast; but meanwhile there was "another King" to whom she could go without delay, with whom she could remain longer, and to whom she could pour out all her heart. The mere force of contrast with the exclusive monarch of Persia brings up comforting and tender thoughts of the Lord Jesus, who does not debar from his presence the weary and heavy-laden, but bids them come; who has chosen the contrite heart as his earthly dwelling-place; who proclaims it as the glory of his home above that there he shall wipe away all tears.

A seraglio is a sad enough place, with its year-long monotony, its petty jealousies, its gilded restraints; but when, as the curtain now falls, we see Esther, with firm-set lips, going to arrange for a long prayer-meeting with her maidens, we feel that this queen has brought a good thing into a sad place. The religion of the heart is never monotonous. Mordecai also moves homeward with a new light in his strong face, to gather such of his brethren as are within the capital, that they may strengthen one another in seeking "the God of Israel, the Saviour who hideth himself." For three days there is silence. After, we shall see Esther and Mordecai again in their place, acting with plenty of decision and vigour; but let us not forget this "pause more full than speech," this "hush more sweet than song."—*A. M. Symington, B.A.*

Woman's self-devotion.—Courage is a noble feminine grace—courage and self-devotion. We are so accustomed to associate courage with physical strength that we do not often think of it as pre-eminently a feminine grace when the feminine nature has been fully unfolded and trained, but it is. The reckless rapture of self-forgetfulness, that which dominates and inspires persons and nations, that which is sovereign over obstacle and difficulty and peril and resistance, it has belonged to woman's heart from the beginning. In the early Pagan time, in the Christian development, in missions and in martyrdoms, it has been shown; in the mediæval age as well as in our own time; in Harriet Newel and Florence Nightingale; in Ann Haseltine as truly and as vividly as in any Hebrew Hadassa or in any French Joan of Arc. You remember the Prussian women after the battle of Jena, when Prussia seemed trampled into the bloody mire under the cannon of Napoleon and the feet of the horses and men in his victorious armies, Prussian women, never losing their courage, flung their ornaments of gold and jewellery into the treasury of the State, taking back the simple cross of Berlin iron which is now the precious heirloom in so many Prussian families, bearing the inscription, "I have gold for iron." That is the glory of womanhood; that passion, and self-forgetfulness, that supreme self-devotion, with which she flings herself into the championship of a cause that is dear and sacred and trampled under foot. It is her crown of renown, it is her staff of power.—*Dr. Storrs.*

"*Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days.*"—They were not called with Esther to go in unto the king. A far less dangerous service was required from them. But, what they can do, and are called to do, they must do as conscientiously as Esther. There are many great works which are beyond our strength, or out of the line of our calling; and yet we may and ought to take a part in them, by strengthening the hands of those who are called to undertake them. Paul had many helpers in his work of the gospel, even among those who could not, or to whom it would not, have been allowed to speak in the Church. We all ought to be fellow-helpers to the truth. When many go abroad to spread the gospel amongst heathens, we find it our duty to continue in the land of our nativity, but, without removing from it, we may promote the work in which they are employed, by our contributions, or at least by our prayers.

There are some who beg the prayers of others, and yet pray little for themselves. Esther, who requested the Jews

to fast for her, told them that she also would fast, and would abstain as strictly from food as she desired them to do. She had been accustomed to a well-furnished table; but she was not thereby disqualified from afflicting her soul by fasting when she saw it to be her duty. She, no doubt, observed the annual fasts prescribed to the Jews, and she determined to observe this extraordinary fast which she herself prescribed. She hoped to obtain mercy from the Lord, that she might escape death by the laws of Persia, and might be the instrument of the salvation of her people. But, if she miscarried, her fasting and prayer would be proper acts of preparation for her latter end.

"*I and my maids will fast.*"—Some, it is probable, of Esther's maids were heathens when they came into her service. Yet, we find her promising that they would fast. She can answer for them, as Joshua for his household, that they would serve the Lord. If mistresses were as zealous as queen Esther for the honour of God, and the conversion of sinners, they would bestow pains upon the instruction and religious improvement of their female servants. If women may gain to Christ their own husbands by their good conversation, may they not also gain the souls of their servants? and if they are gained to Christ, they are gained to themselves also. Esther expected much benefit from the devotional exercises of her maidens. Paul expected much from the prayers of his converts. Those whom we convert from the error of their ways will be our joy and helpers upon earth: they will be our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.

"*I and my maids will fast.*"—Esther could not join in the public prayers of the Jews, when they met together out of many families, to strive together in their prayers to God. But she will fast at home, not only by herself, but with her maidens. There are public fasts in which all are expected to join. There ought likewise to be secret and family fasts observed by us, according to the calls of providence, and the situation of our affairs, or the condition of our souls.

"*And then will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law.*"—She would not go in unto the king till she had made her supplication to the Lord, and till the Jews had given her the assistance of their prayers. She was sensible, that though "all men will intreat the ruler's favour, every man's judgment comes from the Lord;" and that the hearts of kings are turned by him according to his pleasure. What, therefore, she desires in the first place is, that she may obtain comfortable assurance of the Divine favour. If the Lord be on her side, she is safe. If the Lord favour her suit, she need not fear the coldness of Ahasuerus, or the mortal enmity of Haman. "The floods may rage. They may lift up their voices and make a mighty noise: but the Lord on high is mightier than the waves of the sea, or the voice of their roaring."

But when the fast is over, she will go in unto the king. She will not think that her duty is done when she has prayed and fasted. She will seek, by the use of proper means, to obtain that blessing which she has been asking. The insincerity of our prayers is too often discovered by our sloth and cowardice. We ask blessings from God, and, as if he were bound to confer them, not according to his own will, but according to ours; we take no care to use those means which he hath appointed for obtaining them, or we do not use them with requisite diligence. Esther will go in unto the king, although she could not go in without violating the laws and risking her life.—*Lawson.*

"He that believeth doth not make haste;" but neither doth he linger like the slothful. Fasting and prayer are preparatives, not substitutes, for active duties. "The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Good resolutions, when difficulties and dangers must be broken through, should be speedily performed; and we should not damp them by prolonging religious exercises. Having spent the time allotted to fasting, Esther rose from the ground, laid aside her sackcloth, and put on her royal apparel. The apocryphal additions to this book

represent her as appealing to God, that she always abhorred these signs of her high estate. That her adorning was in the hidden man of the heart, that she did not glory in her crown and embroidered garments, and would have been willing to have thrown them away for the sake of conscience and the good of her people, is all true. But why should she have abhorred them in themselves? There was nothing sinful or necessarily contaminating in their touch; they were given her of God; they were the badge of the rank to which she had been raised; and had she appeared without them, or worn them in an awkward, slovenly manner, she would have dishonoured her husband, and defeated her laudable enterprise. Esther did not adorn herself to attract the regards of Ahasuerus, but because she felt it incumbent on her to appear in a manner becoming her station. There is no sin in persons dressing according to their rank. The king's daughter may be all glorious within, though her garments are of wrought gold; and the plainest and coarsest garb may conceal a proud and haughty spirit.—*Lawson.*

Our flesh is always timid when it has to encounter a hazard. My Christ, in his Divine majesty, stands at the entrance into the faith, and sounds the free invitation to each and all, ever frequent, ever dear, ever happy. One should succour his neighbour in peril and need, and especially the brethren in the faith even at the peril of one's own life. We are born for good not to ourselves, but to others, and thus God oftentimes shows us that through us he aids our own country and the community. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. We may use ordinary prayer for important blessings. Life can never be spent better than when it is the aim to lose it.—*Starke.*

A woman is sometimes wound up to firm and determined action when the lives of her kindred are at stake, which surpasses the marvels of heroic story, and sends a wild pulsation of startled admiration to vibrate through all hearts to the end of time. Who can read of Deborah delivering Israel from ruin without rapture? or Margaret Roper breaking through a London crowd to kiss her father, Sir Thomas More, about to be beheaded? or Joan of Arc—that light of ancient France—who, a mere girl, delivered her country from invaders, and restored the crown to her sovereign at the high altar of Rheims? or

"Her, who knew that love can vanquish death—
Who, kneeling with one arm about the king,
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in spring"?—*B. Kent.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 17.

A GOOD MAN'S CHARACTERISTICS.

I. Mordecai went his way pondering. Mordecai was a man of thought, as is plainly seen from the whole course of this narrative. His course of conduct was evidently the result of intense thought. And this was a special occasion for thought. He would still require to ponder deeply, for we must think not only to form our plans, but also after our plans are on their way to accomplishment. This is characteristic of a good man, that he thinks. David often speaks of thinking. "When I thought to know this." "I thought on my ways." The prophets were men of thought. The question was asked, "How knoweth this man letters, or learning, having never learned." The answer may be given—that Jesus was supernaturally endowed, and he exercised himself to acquire knowledge. He studied the Old Testament writings, and the ways of men. He thought. He increased in wisdom. There was mental development in the man Christ Jesus. The apostles thought. Goodness is helpful to, and is the provocative of, thought. It enables the mind to see clearly. It stimulates the mind to think deeply. To pray well is to study well. To live in the pure atmosphere of goodness is a

enlarge the nature. Professedly good men should seek to think more. There is a want of strenuous thinking in the present day. We do not ponder. We muse. We sentimentalize. We indulge in sentiment for the mere luxury of excitement. There is further a want of thinking for others. Our thoughts are too much centred on self. Mordecai thought for his people.

II. Mordecai went his way believing. The man of faith finds that the occasions of life increase his faith. The movements of Providence tend to strengthen his confidence. We have seen that Mordecai was a man of faith, and here in Esther's answer he finds encouragement to keep on believing. His faith lived through, and was not destroyed by, Esther's apparent refusal, and now his faith is wonderfully enlarged by Esther's gracious answer of determination to make the venture. He believed before that enlargement and deliverance would arise from another place, and now he believes still more strongly that God will save his anointed. God has given enlargement already by rewarding Mordecai's faith, and giving him fresh reasons for confidence. The faith of the Christian is not killed by the trials of life, and is developed by the occasional tokens of Divine interposition. Faith leads to more faith. It is strengthened by the storm. It ripens in the calm. It surmounts discouragements. It finds encouragement where there may be little to be seen by doubt. It gathers food in the most barren spots. It turns the sterile rock into a garden of promise. It never sinks beneath the billows, for it firmly grasps the hand of omnipotence. Lord, we believe, but our faith is weak. Oh, help our unbelief! Give signs and tokens of thy presence that doubting ones may become believing ones. Raise up in these modern times heroes of faith. Oh, let the mighty power of faith be again manifested! The world requires a fresh race of heroes who shall through faith subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, and wax valiant in moral fights.

III. Mordecai went his way obeying. Faith without works is dead. Mordecai did according to all that Esther had commanded him. He saw that Esther's command was in harmony with the command of God, and therefore he obeyed. Two things are to be taken into consideration with reference to earthly commands. Who commands? What is the nature of the commandment? There is a *primâ facie* objection against the commands of some. They are not noted either for wisdom or for piety. We very soon settle in our minds as to their utterances. Esther possessed both wisdom and piety. Mordecai might therefore very properly consider the nature of her requirements. However, it is human to err. The best people make mistakes. We have, then, to examine all commands. It is to be presumed that Mordecai examined the command of Esther and saw its propriety. There is no need to examine the propriety of the commandments of God. His commandments are not grievous. All his laws are right. All his requirements are the result of wisdom. Therefore let us obey promptly and persistently. Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice. Here note that God gives credit for an action when the true purpose is found in the mind to do the commandment. While Mordecai is on his way to gather together all the Jews that were present in Shushan, he may be said to do according to that which Esther had commanded. God takes notice of good intentions, of holy resolves, as well as of actual performances. Death may intervene between the resolve and its execution on earth; but death cannot prevent the holy resolution being developed in heaven, death cannot rob the earnestly resolving soul of its Divine reward. Death may seem to kill the noble purpose, but there is a sphere where death has no power and where the noble purposes of earth may fructify. In this aspect heaven is the complement of earth. It is man's to resolve and to do so far as possible. God will rightly perfect that which concerneth his saints.

IV. Mordecai went his way praising. It is not a great stretch of imagination to suppose Mordecai praising God for his goodness on his way from the palace-gates. He would naturally praise God for the readiness with which Esther now

entered upon the difficult enterprise. We must praise God not only for the accomplished deliverance, but when the deliverance is being accomplished. Prayer must be joined with praise. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God. Some cannot see an opportunity for praise when it is a season of fasting and prayer. "Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Suggestive Comments on Verse 17.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according, &c.—As he had put her upon a dangerous, but, as the cause stood, necessary, exploit (nature will venture its own particular good for the general, as heavy things will ascend to keep out vacuity, and preserve the universe); so he is ruled by her (though a woman, and once his pupil) when he perceived her counsel was good. Abraham must hear Sarah, and David Abigail, and Apollos Priscilla, when they speak reason. It is foretold of a man in Christ, that a little child shall lead him.—*Trapp.*

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. — Mordecai commanded Esther, and she obeyed him. Esther commanded Mordecai, and he obeyed her. They served one another in love. It would be happy for us if we knew how to command and how to obey in our turns, being subject one to another in the fear of God.

Mordecai required the Jews to fast three days according to Esther's orders; and we have no reason to doubt of their ready and grateful compliance. They would not think it hard, but necessary and useful, to be called to afflict their souls to an extraordinary degree, when their lives and the lives of all their people were in question. And yet the present life of all the many thousands of Judah was not of equal importance to the eternal life of one precious soul. What, then, are we to think of ourselves, if the sentence of eternal death denounced against every sinner, has never induced us to devote as many hours to fervent prayer, as these Jews employed days in prayer and fasting to obtain deliverance from temporal death? Is it not to be feared that we do not really believe what the Scripture tells us about that judgment which is come upon all men to condemnation, if we think it too much trouble to spend some hours or days in considering our condition, and pouring out supplications for that mercy which we so greatly need. The Jews fasted. Esther went in to the king, uncertain about the event, but pressed by hard necessity. Necessity is laid upon sinners, yea, woe unto them if they do not obtain mercy! But great encouragement is given them to come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy. God himself puts words into their mouths, and will he not hear those prayers which are dictated by his own Spirit? (Hos. xiv. 2, 3; Jer. xxxi. 18—20.)—*Lawson.*

Ver. 17. That which belongs to us in our calling is care of discharging our duty; that which God takes upon him is assistance, and good success in it. Let us do our work, and leave God to do his own. Diligence and trust in him is only ours, the rest of the burden is his. In a family the father's and the master's care is the greatest; the child's care is only to obey, and the servant's to do his work; care of provision and protection doth not trouble them. Most of our disquietness in our calling is, that we trouble ourselves about God's work. Trust God and be doing, and let him alone with the rest. He stands upon his credit so much, that it shall appear we have not trusted him in vain, even when we see no appearance of doing any good. Peter fished all night, and catched

nothing, yet upon Christ's word he casts in his net again, and caught as many fish as brake his net. Covetousness, when men will be richer than God would have them, troubles all; it troubles the house, the whole family, and the house within us, our precious soul, which should be a quiet house for God's Spirit to dwell in, whose seat is a quiet spirit. If men would follow Christ's method, and "seek first the kingdom of heaven," all other things would be cast upon them. If thoughts of insufficiency in our places discourage us, remember what God saith to Moses, when he pretended disability to speak, "Who hath made man's mouth? have not I, the Lord!" All our sufficiency for every calling is from God.

God is never nearer his Church than when trouble is near. Usually, after the lowest ebb follows the highest springtide. Christ stands upon Mount Zion. There is a counsel in heaven that will dash the mould of all contrary counsels on earth, and, which is more, God will work the raising of the Church by that very means by which his enemies seek to ruin it. God gave too dear a price for his Church to suffer it long in the hands of merciless enemies. Take heed therefore of fretting, because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass, for the arms of the wicked shall be broken. The depths of misery are never beyond the depths of mercy. God oft, for this very end, strips his Church of all helps below, that it may only rely upon him, and that it may appear that the Church is ruled by a higher power than it is opposed by. And then is the time when we may expect great deliverances in the Church, when there *is a great faith in the great God.*—*Sibbes.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 3. *The patriotic Greek.* Be like that patriotic Greek, who with his little band of followers had to check the great army of the Persians. He knew that to go down into the open plain and to expose himself there to all his enemies at once would be speedy destruction. He therefore took his stand in the narrow mountain pass, and encountered his foes as they came one by one. So be it with you. Keep to the narrow pass of today. Face your troubles one by one as they arise. Do not commit yourself to the open plain of tomorrow. You are not equal to that. God does not require you to do that.—*Spurgeon.*

Haman may not have the power to carry out his bloody and revengeful decree. God will interpose in a wonderful method to your deliverance. Face for the present only the trouble caused by the proclamation, and do not ask how will it be when the time comes for the proclamation to take effect.

Ver. 3. *Unskilful persons in a boat.* I have seen young and unskilful persons sitting in a boat, when every little wave sporting about the sides of the vessel, and every motion and dancing of the barge, seemed a danger, and made them cling fast upon their fellows; and yet all the while they were as safe as if they sat in a tree, while the gentle wind shook the leaves into refreshment and cooling shade. And so the unskilful, inexperienced Christian shrieks out whenever his vessel shakes, thinking it always danger that the watery pavement is not stable and resident like the rock; and yet all his danger is in himself, none at all from without; for he is indeed moving upon the waters, but fastened to a rock; faith is his foundation, and hope his anchor, and death is his harbour, and Christ his port, and heaven his country; and all the evils of poverty, or affronts of tribunals and evil judges, all fears and sad anticipations, are bent like the loud wind blowing from the right point; they make a noise and drive faster to the harbour.

Ver. 3. *Sour milk and black bread.* We had traversed the Great Aletsch Glacier, and were very hungry when we reached the mountain tarn half-way between the Bel Alps and the hotel at the foot of the Aeggischorn; there a peasant undertook to descend the mountain, and bring us bread and milk. It was a very Marah to us when he brought us back milk too sour for us to drink, and bread black as a coal, too hard to bite, and sour as the curds. What then? Why, we longed the more eagerly to reach the hotel towards which we were travelling. We mounted our horses, and made no more halts till we reached the hospitable table where our hunger was abundantly satisfied. Thus our disappointments on the road to heaven whet our appetites for the better country, and quicken the pace of our pilgrimage to the celestial city.—*Spurgeon.*

Ver. 4. *Hardening effects of sensibility.* The frequent repetition of that species of emotion which fiction stimulates tends to prevent benevolence, because it is out of proportion to corresponding action; it is like that frequent "going over the theory of virtue in our thoughts," which, as Butler says, so far from being auxiliary to it, may be obstructive of it. As long as the balance is maintained between the stimulus given to imagination with the consequent emotions, on the one hand, and our practical habits, which those emotions are chiefly designed to form and strengthen,

on the other, so long the stimulus of the imagination will not stand in the way of benevolence, but aid it, and, therefore, if you will read a novel extra now and then, impose upon yourself the corrective of an extra visit or two to the poor, the distressed, and afflicted! Keep a sort of debtor and creditor account of sentimental indulgence and practical benevolence. I do not care if your pocket-book contains some such memoranda as these: For the sweet tears I shed over the romantic sorrows of Charlotte Devereux, sent three basins of gruel and a flannel petticoat to poor old Molly Brown; For sitting up three hours beyond the time over the "Bandit's Bride," gave half-a-crown to Betty Smith; My sentimental agonies over the pages of the "Broken Heart" cost me three visits to the Orphan Asylum and two extra hours of Dorcas Society work; Two quarts of caudle to poor Johnson's wife, and some gaberdines for his ragged children, on account of a good cry over the pathetic story of the "Forsaken One." If the luxury of sympathy and mere benevolent feeling be separated from action, then Butler's paradox becomes a terrible truth, and the heart is not made better, but worse, by it. Those who indulge in superfluous expression of sentiment are always neophytes in virtue at the best; and, what is worse, they are very often among the most heartless of mankind. Sterne and Rousseau were types of this class,—perfect incarnations of sensibility without benevolence,—having, and having in perfection, the "form" of virtue, but "denying the power thereof."—*Greyson's Letters.*

Ver. 5. *Eudocia and Chrysostom.* When Queen Eudocia angrily threatened Chrysostom with banishment, he calmly replied: "Go tell her I fear nothing but sin. He who serves God need fear nothing so much as sin." It is as Christ Jesus is born in the heart that we are made free from the slavery of sin, and become the servants of God. This is the sign of the new birth, that the man is afraid of sin. The man who serves God may well be delivered from all slavish fear.

Ver. 5. *Saxon serfs.* Just as the king's livery frees the wearer of it from certain civil penalties and taxes; just as in our Saxon institutions the serfs of the crown were noble; so it is with Christians. The serfs of Jesus Christ are the truest nobles. They rise above all other kind of nobility. The wearers of heaven's livery, those who bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, ought to be free from men. They are to be free from men, free from the world, free from cares, free from self and sin. What a liberty is this! The more we are enslaved the more we are set free. The more serfdom the more liberty. —*Maclaren.*

Ver. 5. *Dead swine good.* To do a few good works at our death only, it is a swinish doing good. The swine will do good when he is dead. Then there is profit of his flesh, though all his life he were noisome. Those men that put off thus, they are rather swine than men, beastly men. God seldom accepts the good they do then, and it is a forced good. If they were not to die then, no good at all would be done. That they do is because they can keep it no longer. It shows they have no grace nor faith at all; for if there had been faith to depend upon God they would have done good before. But we must serve God in our generation if we will be saved. —*Sibbes.*

Ver. 5. *Church-door religion.* That is no religion that is left behind in the Church; as Lactantius saith, that is no religion that we leave behind when we come to the Church door. But that is religion when we leave our duty here, and carry it in our breasts to practise it every day in the week; when we show it in our places. That is the service of God. It is not the matter or stuff, but the stamp, that makes the coin; so it is not the work, but the stamp, that makes it a service. Let the king set a stamp but upon a brass, yet it will go for current if it have the king's stamp upon it. Let it be but an action of our callings, if it have God's stamp upon it, it is a "service" of God. Our whole life, not only in the Church, but in our particular places, may be a "service of God."—*Sibbes.*

Ver. 5. *Cardinal Wolsey.* The following was his last charge:—"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away thy ambition. By that sin fell the angels. How can man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it? Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee; still in thy right hand carry gentle peace, to silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not. Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy country's, thy God's, and truth's; then, if thou fallest, oh, Cromwell! thou fallest a blessed martyr. Serve the king; and, pr'ythee, lead me in. There take an inventory of all I have, to the last penny: 'tis the king's; my robe, and my integrity to heaven, is all I dare now call mine own. Oh, Cromwell, Cromwell! had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, he would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies."

Ver. 6. *Sermon to one hearer.* The well-known American divine, Dr. Beecher, once engaged to preach for a country minister on exchange, and the Sabbath proved to be one excessively stormy, cold, and uncomfortable. It was in mid-winter, and the snow was piled all along in the roads, so as to make the passage very difficult. Still the minister urged his horse through the drifts, put the animal into a shed, and went into the little rural chapel. As yet there was no person in the place, and, after looking about, the preacher took his seat in the pulpit. Soon the door opened, and a single individual walked up the aisle, looked about, and took a seat. The hour came for commencing service, but no more hearers appeared. Whether to preach to such an audience was a question, and it was one that Lyman Beecher was not long deciding. He went through all the services, praying, singing, preaching, and the benediction, with only one hearer. When all was over, he hastened down from the desk to speak to his "congregation," but he had departed. Travelling in Ohio, twenty years afterwards, the doctor alighted from the stage one day in a pleasant village, when a gentleman stepped up and spoke to him, familiarly calling him by name. "I do not remember you," said the Doctor. "I

suppose not," said the stranger; "but we once spent two hours together in a house alone in a storm." "I do not recall it, sir," added the old man; "pray when was it?" "Do you remember preaching, twenty years ago, in such a place, to a single person?" "Yes, yes," said the doctor, grasping his hand, "I do, indeed; and if you are the man, I have been wishing to see you ever since." "I am the man, sir; and that sermon saved my soul, made a minister of me, and yonder is my church. The converts of that sermon, sir, are all over Ohio."

Ver. 7. *Sidney Smith.* Sidney Smith once said there would be a great many more good Samaritans in the world if it were not for the oil and for the twopence.

Some one went to Theodore Hook, and told him that a certain friend of theirs was in want of money. "How much?" he asked. "Well," said the other, "I think a three and two noughts will set him right." On this Hook remarked, "He is a right good fellow; I tell you what I'll do, I'll give him one of the noughts."

Ver. 8. *Bunyan's wife.* Her heroic achievements on behalf of her husband are admirably related by Bunyan. She travelled to London with a petition to the House of Lords, and intrusted it to Lord Barkwood, who informed her that they could not interfere, the king having committed the release of the prisoners to the judges. Several times she appeared before them: love to her husband, a stern sense of duty, a conviction of the gross injustice practised upon one to whom she was most tenderly attached, overcame her delicate, modest, retiring habits, and forced upon her this strange duty. This delicate, courageous, high-minded woman appeared before Judge Hale, who was most affected with her earnest pleading. It was the triumph of love, duty, and piety, over bashful timidity. Bunyan's wife in pleading with the judge for his liberty, said, "My lord, I have four small children that cannot help themselves, of which one is blind, and have nothing to live upon but the charity of good people." Her energetic appeals were in vain; and with bitter feelings she returned to the prison, believing that it would be the tomb of her beloved husband.

Ver. 8. *Queen Philippa.* After the surrender of the town of Calais to King Edward III. he granted to the inhabitants their lives, but expelled them from the town, and demanded that six of the richest burgesses should be delivered up to his vengeance: Eustace de St. Pierre, John Dacre, James and Peter Wisart, and two others whose names history does not record, nobly volunteered to resign their lives for the safety of their fellow-citizens, and dressed only in their shirts, went barefoot, with halters round their necks, to present the keys of the town to Edward, who ordered them to immediate execution; but the prayers and entreaties of the queen procured their pardon. She then ordered clothes to be brought them, entertained them in her tent, and dismissed them with presents.

Ver. 14. *Buonaparte's activity.* It is noticed by some writer concerning Buonaparte, that he never went into town or city or country new to him, but immediately he was examining and considering the best place for a castle or a camp, for an ambushment or an attack, for the means of defence or annoyance. Thus he was not waiting, but always seeking to be in preparation. Those who profess to have nobler ends in view should always be planning new methods by which to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 14. *Not sick when duty calls.*

"*Brutus.* O, what a time have you chose out, brave Caius, to wear a kerchief! Would you were not sick!

Ligarius. I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand any exploit worthy the name of honour.

Bru. Such an exploit have I in hand, Ligarius, had you a healthful ear to hear of it.

Lig. By all the gods that Romans bow before
I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!
Brave son, deriv'd from honourable loins!
Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up
My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,
And I will strive with things impossible;
Yea, get the better of them. What's to do?'

This is the spirit which the servant of God should both possess and manifest. Not sick when duty calls. Ready to run where danger thickens, and where honourable exploits are to be performed for God's glory. No need to wait long and ask what's to do in this world of sin and of misery. Oh, that the Holy Spirit, that Divine exorcist, would conjure up the mortified spirits of men morally sick, that they may be valiant to get the better of things impossible!

Ver. 14. *The teaching of children.* These things Mordecai urges to Esther; and some of the Jewish writers, who are fruitful in invention, add another thing which had happened to him which he desired she might be told, "that going home, the night before, in great heaviness, upon the notice of Haman's plot, he met three Jewish children coming from school, of whom he inquired what they had learned that day. One of them told him his lesson was, Be not afraid of sudden fear; the second told him his was, Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; the third told him his was, I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you. "O the goodness of God," says Mordecai, "who out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ordains strength!"—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 14. *The shepherd crushed by the rock.* I remember, away up in a lonely Highland valley, where beneath a tall black cliff, all weather-worn, and cracked, and seamed, there lies at the foot, resting on the greensward that creeps round its base, a huge rock that has fallen from the face of the cliff. A shepherd was passing beneath it; and suddenly, when the finger of God's will touched it, and rent it from its ancient bed in the everlasting rock, it came down, leaping and bounding from pinnacle to pinnacle, and it fell, and the man that was beneath it—is there now! Ground to powder! Ah, my brethren, that is not my illustration—that is Christ's. Therefore, I say to you, since all that stand against him shall become "as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor," and be swept utterly away, make him

the foundation on which you build; and when the rain sweeps away every "refuge of lies," you will be safe and serene, builded upon the Rock of Ages.—*A. McLaren.*

CONSECRATION HYMN.

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and "beautiful" for thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

F. R. Havergal.

Ver. 16. *Not necessary to live.* Sibbes says: "It is necessary we should be just; it is not necessary we should live." This saying is enforced and illustrated by one of the gems of Dr. Samuel Johnson preserved by Boswell. A man who was engaged in a disreputable business was defending himself against the sarcasms of Dr. Samuel Johnson, and pleaded, "he must live." "Not at all, sir; there is no necessity for *your* living," was the memorable reprimand by way of response. Esther felt that duty must be done. It was not necessary for her to live, but it was necessary that an effort should be made to thwart a cruel and vindictive edict.

Ver. 16. *A true hero.* The city of Marseilles in France was once afflicted with the plague. So terrible was it that it caused parents to desert children, and children to forget the obligations to their own parents. The city became as a desert, and funerals were constantly passing through its streets. Everybody was sad, for nobody could stop the ravages of the plague. The physicians could do nothing, and as they met one day to talk over the matter and see if something could not be done to prevent this great destruction of life, it was decided that nothing could be effected without opening a corpse in order to find the mysterious character of the disease. All agreed upon the plan, but who would be the victim, it being certain that he should die soon after? There was a dead pause. Suddenly one of the most celebrated physicians, a man in the prime of life, arose from his seat and said: "Be it so, I devote myself to the safety of my country. Before this numerous assembly I swear, in the name of humanity and religion, that to-morrow at the break of day I will dissect a corpse, and write down as I proceed what I observe." He immediately left the room, and as he was rich, made a will, and spent that evening in religious exercises. During the night a man died in his house of the plague, and at daybreak the following morning, the physician, whose name was Greyon, entered the room, and critically made the examination. He then left the room, threw the papers into a vase of vinegar, so that they might not convey the disease to another, and retired to a convenient place, where he died in twelve hours.

Ver. 16. *Devotion of Arminius to his work.* As James Arminius passed along one of the poorer districts of the city, he heard a certain lowly dwelling resound with the voice of wailing. Immediately on perceiving that the whole of that household had been seized with the plague, and were in torment arising from the most burning thirst, he not only gave money to the neighbours, who were standing by, with which to purchase a draught, but further, when not one of them dared to enter that infected abode of poverty, he himself, heedless of every danger to which by this step he exposed himself and those dear to him, intrepidly walked in, and imparted refreshment, at once for the body and the soul, to every single member of this afflicted family.—*Brandt's Life of Arminius.*

The Findern flower. Sir Edmund Burke was writing a book, and he went to the North, to inquire particulars of a certain family named Findern. But he could find no account of them remaining—no memorial, no hall in ruins. He asked a working man if he could tell him anything about the family, and he said he could show him the Findern flower—a small blue flower, said to have been imported into England by Sir Joshua Findern on his return from the Crusades. It springs up, and never dies. It grows nowhere else in England, but here it cannot be eradicated. Benevolence is a beautiful flower; like the Findern flower it need never die; unlike the Findern flower it can flourish anywhere. It may grow in palace or in cottage, in the hot-house or in the cold night of an Arctic winter. This flower flourished in the nature of Esther, and how beautiful it looked, what sweet fragrance it imparted, what glorious colours it unfolded!

Ver. 16. *Everything to die for.* A correspondent relates this suggestive incident:—"We recently called on a lady of culture and refinement, who, having just taken possession of a new house with elegant surroundings, had suddenly been called to face the approach of a fearful disease that seemed beyond human power to avert. With a loving husband and winsome daughter, with a home filled with evidences of wealth and taste, encircled by warm, true-hearted friends, with everything earthly to make life glad and joyous, we remarked: 'You have everything to live for. Does it not depress you to think that all this must be given up if this disease is not stayed?' The reply, simple, earnest, truthful, 'Why, I have everything to die for,' indicated the rich, abiding wealth of a soul

whose trust is stayed on God, and showed that she was lifted up into a life of serenity and peace that could never be shaken by storms and tempests. Can any faith or any religion, save that of the Christian, enable one thus to triumph over pain, thus to look upon death, thus to contemplate separation from the dear ones linked by the holiest of earthly ties! All things to die for! Reunion with friends who long since left us; pain and suffering only memories of a former past; complete and eternal freedom from sin; complicity with unseen power of evil at an end; the presence of the pure and the holy; communion with him who shall wipe all tears from our eyes; at home and at rest for ever with the Lord—was not the remark of our friend most emphatically true? On the grandeur and the beauty of that faith which sees through the rifted clouds the glory beyond, which can say amid deepest darkness, 'The morning cometh;' that faith which with 'things seen and temporal,' most beautiful and attractive, can raise up into a full appreciation of 'the things that are unseen and eternal;' that faith which bridges over the dark river, enabling the believer to tread with firm footstep and alone the way that leads to the unknown land; that faith which will lead one encircled by richest earthly gifts, to say: "I have everything to die for!'"

Esther had everything to live for according to human estimates, yet she was willing to die.

Ver. 16. *A young Illinois hero.* An American paper chronicles a bit of heroism by a Peoria county boy which deserves recognition. A coal shaft is being sunk just north of Hollis, Illinois, and the other day a workman, by the name of Harland, lighted a slow match leading to the blast, and then signalled to be drawn up. The depth of the shaft was seventy feet. When he had been raised fourteen feet he struck the bottom of a board partition, and was thrown back to the bottom. Thomas Crandall, a step-son of Harland, was a witness to the accident, and promptly slid down the rope, seventy feet, and tore the match from the fuze in time to prevent an explosion. The act was a brave one, scarcely to be paralleled. The boy's hands were terribly lacerated by the friction of the rope. The step-father was rescued with a broken rib and other severe bruises. The heroic act of this brave boy can be not only "paralleled," but surpassed. Esther exposed herself to equal risk to save a whole people to whom she was bound by the ties of nationality.

Ver. 16. *The Grace Darling of Berstead.* The sea-coast Sussex village of Berstead, adjacent to Bognor, is justly proud of Mrs. Wheatland, a brave and strong middle-aged matron, the mother of a large family, who has saved thirteen lives in the past twenty years, by swimming out to the rescue of drowning bathers. So here are no less than thirteen lives which our good, strong Mary Wheatland has saved. How many more there may have been "goodness knows;" for she looks on life-saving as part of her regular business—and she found it hard to tax her memory even with these examples. Thus her splendid conscience is hung with immortal but immaterial medals. She has never sought any from the Humane Society, nor does she seem to think she has done anything meritorious or worthy of human distinction. How many lives Esther has saved we cannot tell; she saved them at the risk of her own—"If I perish I perish." Surely her splendid conscience was hung with immortal but immaterial medals. Surely the Jews are righ in perpetuating the glory of her name.

CHAPTER V

CRITICAL NOTES.] **1. The third day]** must be counted from the day of the transaction between the queen and Mordecai; the first day being that on which it took place. The fasting, then, would not begin till midday; and on the third day Esther went to the king to invite him on that day to a banquet, which would surely take place in the forenoon. Thus the three days' fast would last from the afternoon of the first to the forenoon of the third day, *i. e.* from 40 to 45 hours.—*Keil.* **Put on royal apparel]** Lit. put on royalty; the expression signifies royal dignity; appeared as became the great occasion. **The inner court of the king's house]** This must have been situated directly in front of the royal audience chamber, or "throne room," where the monarch was wont to sit when receiving ministers of state, and attending to the business of the empire.—*Whedon's Com.* **2.]** The king held out the golden sceptre as a token of his favourable disposition; and Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre; probably kissed it, as the Vulgate renders the word. **3. What wilt thou, queen Esther?]** Rather, what ails thee? According to Herodotus (ix. 109), Xerxes, when pleased with one of his wives, offered to grant her any request whatever, without hesitation.—*Rawlinson.* **4.]** For the present she requests nothing further than that the king and Haman should come to the banquet she had prepared. She desired Haman to be present, in order, as Calov remarks, that she might charge him by name in the presence of the king with the decree surreptitiously obtained against the people, and to his very face cut off every possibility of cavil; perhaps also in order to make his confusion the more complete. **6. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine]** After the meats were removed it was customary in Persia to continue the

banquet for a considerable time with fruits and wine (Herod. 1, 333). During this part of the feast the king renewed his offer.—*Rawlinson.* The king understood that there was some request besides the mere coming to her banquet. **7, 8.**] **Esther answered, My petition and my request; If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said]** *i. e.* make known my request. She did not esteem the time an appropriate one for expressing her request. **9.**] Haman was joyful at the thought of receiving such honour from the king and queen; but the greatness of his joy rendered him still more indignant at Mordecai for his stubborn refusal to show outward tokens of respect. **10.**] However, Haman refrained himself till he could consult his friends and his wife Zeresh. His friends—his intimate associates and companions—diviners and wise men—with whom he met in councils and in festivities.—*Whedon's Com.* **11. The multitude of his children]** From ix. 7—10 we learn that Haman had ten sons; and many sons were not looked upon as a great blessing from God by the Israelites only, but were also esteemed a signal prosperity among the Persians, the king annually sending presents to him who had the greatest number of sons.—*Keil.* **12.**] Haman had also the honour of being invited to the banquet alone. **13.**] And yet all his good fortune is embittered to him as often as he sees the hated Jew, Mordecai. The fact that such a Jew may defy him unpunished seems to be a counter-proof against his dignity and power. **14. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him,** &c.] The name Zeresh is probably connected with Zered Zara, "gold." Compare the Greek *chrysis.*—*Rawlinson.* Zeresh led the counsel. Kings as well as their chief officers doubtless often allowed themselves to be directed by their wives. **Let a gallows]** Heb. a tree, or wood: that is, a lofty beam or post for impalement; not a gallows, or gibbet, in the ordinary sense. Hanging with a rope by the neck seems not to have been a Persian mode of punishment, but impalement was common. Haman's wife and friends proposed to make the post of wood for Mordecai's execution fifty cubits high—seventy-five feet—so as to make his impalement as conspicuous and as ignominious as possible. Feuardent well says: "But why make it so high? (*i. e.* the tree, gallows). In order that his disgrace might be plainly observable to the eyes of all, and the more striking. Wherefore should he be in such haste about it? Lest there should be danger in delay or procrastination. For what reason have it erected before his own house? So that he and all his family, going in and out, seeing Mordecai hanging, might mock and feast their cruel eyes and minds with so miserable and foul a spectacle."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1, 2.

THE ROYALTY OF FAITH.

WATSON says—"True faith is prolifical, it brings forth fruit; faith hath Rachel's beauty and Leah's fruitfulness." Esther's faith in this instance gave to her more than Rachel's beauty and Leah's fruitfulness. It enhanced the claims of her natural beauty. It gave inexpressible sweetness to her sadness. It surrounded her with an irresistible grace. Leah's fruitfulness was of a natural character; Esther's fruitfulness was moral. Let us now consider the royalty of Esther's faith, and may it stimulate us to seek more earnestly to be invested with this royal apparel, and inwardly strengthened with this royal grace.

I. **Royal apparel may cover a sad heart.** Esther at this time must have had a sad heart; and however tastefully she may have been adorned, the sadness of her heart could not be concealed. We may well suppose that this sadness gave attractive sweetness to her countenance. Sad hearts beat and throb beneath costly robes. We pity the beggar in his rags. We are superficial. The outward affects more than the inward. Oftentimes more pity should be evoked by the sight of those clothed in purple and fine linen. Amid the splendours of royalty the wretchedness of humanity is visible. Shakespeare says, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." No monarchs have risen up to refute the libel; yea, many kings have borne witness to its truthfulness. In ancient history we read that the sleep went from king Darius; and many kings since then have tossed in sleepless misery on beds of down, amid drapery of purple and of gold. King David cries, "I am poor and needy;" poor in the midst of an abundance of wealth; needy while thousands are ready to supply his wants.

II. **The royalty of faith sustains in sadness.** Some make too much of Esther's sadness in the present instance. Sometimes she is represented as fainting. Sad no doubt she was, but her sadness had not a paralyzing effect. Sad no doubt

she might well be, considering the importance of the interests at stake and the desperate nature of her venture; but her sadness had not a killing effect upon her nervous system, for we may be well assured that her faith sustained her. The sacred record says nothing about her fainting. That faith which led her to exclaim, "If I perish I perish;" which supported through the long fast, which led her to take wise means for the success of her enterprise, which brought her to face the worst—would not fail her now at this the most important point of her undertaking. We seem to see the royalty of her faith eclipsing far the royalty of her apparel. The latter could not prevent her sadness. The former sustained in her sadness, and made it sweetly beautiful. Gloriously charming it is to see a sustaining faith overcoming and smiling through the sadness of a beautiful woman. The royalty of faith is the only power to sustain in sadness. It is a royal power that possesses the true alchemy which can transmute the base metal of sadness into the celestial gold of abiding gladness. Go to the chamber of the sick saint, and ask what inspires with patience, and even with holy pleasure. Go to the cell where virtue is imprisoned, and ask what enables the prisoner to sing songs of rapture, to see sights of beauty, to feed on heavenly manna, to ascend the Delectable Mountains, to feel the light of heaven around, and to catch the freshly-blowing breezes of Paradise. Go to the missionary in far-off lands, exiled from his home, in loneliness pursuing his weary but heavenly mission, standing bereft of wife and of child on account of the unhealthiness of the country where he labours, and ask what sustains under such trying circumstances. Go to the pastor labouring amongst an unresponsive people, his heart well nigh broken by indifference and in some cases by actual cruelty, and ask what stimulates to heroic perseverance. Go to the martyr chained to the stake; see the faggots piled round about him; already the flames lick and scorch his body; but lo! his face is lighted up as if it had been the face of an angel, and now he sings his own funeral hymn, not a sad dirge, but inspiriting strains; and again inquire whence this wonderful triumph. And all with one consent acknowledge the sustaining power of faith. This is the victory that overcometh the world—even our faith.

III. The royalty of faith leads to daring ventures. We can scarcely either understand or appreciate the daring nature of that venture which was made by Esther. The words are to us often only as so many words—these words "And Esther stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house." It would be something to brave and to pass the sentinel, and all the court attendants, and present ourselves before our gracious queen. But this would be as nothing to what Esther did, though she was herself a queen. We understand the heroic power of faith in the conduct of the three Hebrew children. We can admire the splendid moral nobility of Daniel, who, in spite of edicts, in spite of threatened lions, holds on to his purpose of prayer to the God of heaven. But let us try to get a correct view of the greatness of Esther's faith, of the might of her heroism, as she stands "in the inner court of the king's house," waiting for the word that may mean life, but might very possibly mean death. She stands dressed in royal apparel, but that royal apparel for aught she knew might be but the splendid yet ghastly preparation for the doom of destruction. If we celebrate the faith of Abraham who was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, shall we have no meed of praise for Esther who was ready to offer up herself? Why Esther's name does not appear among the list of those worthies whose faith is celebrated in the Hebrews we cannot tell? Perhaps if time had not failed the writer he would have used Esther's name as an illustration of the power of faith. Certainly we cannot help feeling that Esther's faith was a Divine inspiration. This, however, we ought surely to learn—that if we make no daring ventures it is because our faith is weak. Faith, like other graces, is increased by exercise. What faith prompts us to do let us at once decide to do. And the more we attempt the more we shall be disposed to attempt.

IV. The royalty of faith is greater than the royalty of mere circumstantials. Here is a contrast—a suppliant woman standing in a helpless attitude, and in an exposed condition. A mighty monarch sitting upon a royal throne in the royal house whose wish is law, and whose word is either life or death. But the suppliant woman masters the mighty monarch. Mere worldly considerations will not satisfactorily account for the victory. We know the power of women over men. We are not unmindful of the great influence which female beauty has wielded over the hearts of kings, over the counsels of courtiers, and over the destinies of nations. It may be said that the weak monarch was captivated and overcome by the charm of Esther's beauty. But this will not meet our view of the case. We believe that Esther was victorious because she was royal by virtue of her faith in God, Ahasuerus was conquered because he was merely royal in circumstantials. Faith is a royal power; it sits enthroned above the might of sceptred kings; it is mightier than the mightiest of the earth-born. Kings have killed the children of the faith, but their royalty has not been overcome. The royalty of faith has subdued kings, and conquered nations. Who are the men that rule to-day? The men of faith. These are the true kings, not those the world calls kings. The Cæsars and the Neros do not now rule; death has stripped them of the outward show of royalty. The Pauls and the Peters now rule. They rule in spheres where their authority is not acknowledged. They overcame death. It gave them a larger kingdom. It granted a nobler royalty. The men of faith sit on a throne that death cannot shake. They wield a sceptre which death cannot touch with its icy hand. As time advances, and as men become still wiser, the men of faith will rule in still larger measure. Faith is better and mightier than weapons of war, than words of wisdom, than the gilded trappings of earthly royalty.

V. The royalty of faith commands success. Esther obtained favour in the sight of the king, and he held out to her the golden sceptre. What we may call natural faith is essential to success. The man must have faith in himself who is to succeed. The farmer must have faith in the abiding character of nature's laws if he is to work with perseverance. The seaman must have faith in the safety of his vessel, and in nautical arrangements, if he is to set forth on his voyage with hope. The merchant must have faith in the promises of his fellows if he is to trade with confidence. This natural faith is working all through society. In the moral realm faith is essential; faith is even of more importance. Faith is not the cause of the favour of God, but the means whereby that favour is disclosed to our hearts. The favour of God towards the believer is antecedent to the exercise of faith, but the exercise of that faith it is which reveals to our souls the existence of that favour. Esther's faith and Esther's beauty caused her to obtain that favour in the sight of the king which she appeared to have lost. The faith of the sinner discovers the favour of God which is waiting to manifest its goodness, and to bestow its blessings. Faith is the condition, but not the cause, of salvation. "Thy faith hath saved thee," saith our Lord to the woman who anointed his head with oil, and his feet with ointment, because her faith laid hold of Christ's forgiving love. That readiness to forgive was there prior to the woman's exercise of faith; but this faith was the means of finding out the greatness of that love. Faith brought peace. Faith is the condition of salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith triumphs over moral difficulties, and obtains success with heaven's king.

Finally, **The royalty of faith sways the golden sceptre.** "The king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre." Esther not only touched, not only kissed the top of the sceptre, but swayed the golden sceptre. The golden sceptre was moved by the hand of Ahasuerus; but Esther's faith moved the arm that moved the sceptre. Esther's power was invisible. The unseen is mightier than the seen. Mind triumphs over matter. Moral force conquers brute force. Esther swayed the

golden sceptre of material sovereignty and she also swayed the golden sceptre of moral sovereignty. Thus Esther was queen in two spheres. She was enthroned in both the material and the moral realms. Faith sways a golden sceptre that exerts an influence reaching farther than the sovereignty of Ahasuerus. He ruled over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces. A great kingdom, yet only one kingdom. Faith rules in two kingdoms. It has to do for power in time and for peace in eternity. Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Godlikeness is the product of living faith. This royal character is not possible without the working of a royal faith. It is then a mighty power. It moves the arm that moves the world. It touches the throne of God with wondrous effect. It makes all heaven listen to the prayers of earth. Faith has an arm stronger than that which tore the gates of Gaza from their fastenings, a sound more powerful than that which overthrew the walls of Jericho, a wisdom superior to that which speaks in the Proverbs of King Solomon, and visions more enrapturing than those which passed before the mind of Ezekiel. Faith sways a golden sceptre which can never be wrested from the grasp. It enables its possessor to ride triumphantly over the boiling waves of trouble, and to pass through the fires unhurt. By the aid of this golden sceptre the man is sovereign over death. He can ask in triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." The glorious answer is given: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This golden sceptre knocks at heaven's gate; it flies open, and the redeemed spirit passes among the royalties of the eternal world.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1—2.

Of all the virgins presented to Ahasuerus, none was so pleasing as Esther. "Let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti." When that decree was published, what strife, what emulations (may we think) was among the Persian damsels that either were, or thought themselves to be, fair! Every one hopes to be a queen; but so incomparable was the beauty of that Jewess, that she is not only taken into the Persian court, as one of the selected virgins, but hath the most honourable place in the seraglio allotted to her. The other virgins pass their probation unregarded; when Esther's turn came, though she brought the same face and demeanour that nature had cast upon her, no eye sees her without admiration. The king is so delighted with her beauty, that, contemning all the more vulgar forms, his choice is fully fixed upon her. Our heavenly King is pleased with all our graces; hot zeal and cool patience pleaseth him; cheerful thankfulness and weeping penitence pleaseth him; charity in the height and humility in the dust pleaseth him; but none of them are welcome to him without faith, as nothing can please him without Christ. There is none that dares venture into his presence without faith; she is that Esther to which God holds out the golden sceptre. Adorn thy soul with this grace; "so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty."—*Adams.*

The apocryphal author and Josephus say that she took two maids with her, on one of whom she leaned, while the other bore up her train,—that her countenance was cheerful and very amiable, but her heart was in anguish,—that the king, lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, at first looked very fiercely upon her, whereupon she grew pale, and fainted, and bowed herself on the head of her maid that went by her; but then God changed the spirit of the king, and, in fear, he leaped from his throne, took her in his arms till she came to herself, and comforted her with loving words. Here we are only told, that he protected her from the law, and assured her of safety by holding out to her the golden sceptre, which she thankfully touched the top of, thereby presenting herself to him as a humble petitioner.

Thus having had power with God, and prevailed, like Jacob, she had power with men too. He that will lose his life for God shall save it, or find it in a better life.—*Matthew Henry.*

The unexpectedness of pleasing objects makes them many times the more acceptable; the beautiful countenance, the graceful demeanour, and goodly presence of Esther have no sooner taken the eyes, than they have ravished the heart, of king Ahasuerus; love hath soon banished all dreadfulness. "And the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand." Moderate intermission is so far from cooling the affection, that it inflames it. Had Esther been seen every day, perhaps that satiety had abated the height of her welcome; now, three and thirty days' retiredness hath endeared her more to the surfeited eyes of Ahasuerus. Had not the golden sceptre been held out, where had queen Esther been? The Persian kings affected a stern awfulness to their subjects; it was death to solicit them uncalled. How safe, how easy, how happy a thing it is, to have to do with the King of heaven, who is so pleased with our access that he solicits suitors! who, as he is unwearable with our requests, so he is infinite in his beneficences!

Commonly, when we fear most we speed best; God then most of all magnifies his bounty to us when we have most afflicted ourselves. Over-confident expectations are seldom but disappointed, while humble suspicions go laughing away. It was the benefit and safety of but one piece of the kingdom that Esther comes to sue for; and, behold, Ahasuerus offers her the free power of the half; he, that gave Haman, at the first word, the lives of all his Jewish subjects, is ready to give Esther half his kingdom ere she ask. Now she is no less amazed at the loving munificence of Ahasuerus than she was before afraid of his austerity.—*Bishop Hall.*

It is likely that she left her attendants without, lest she should draw them into danger; and contented herself (when she went in to the king) with those faithful companions, Faith, Hope, and Charity, who brought her off also with safety.

And the king sat upon his royal throne. Royal indeed, as Athenæus describeth it. It should be our earnest desire to see the King of Glory upon his throne. Austin wished that he might have seen three things: 1. Romam in flore; 2. Paulum in ore; 3. Christum in corpore. Rome in the flourish, Paul in the pulpit, Christ in the flesh. Venerable Bede cometh after, and correcting this last wish, saith, Imo vero Christum in solio sedentem. Let me see Christ upon his throne royal rather.

And the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre. He did not kick her out of his presence, as some Cambyses would have done, neither did he command her to the block, as Henry VIII. did his Anne Bullen upon a mere misprision of disloyalty; neither yet did he cashier her, as he had done Vashti for a less offence; but, by holding out his sceptre shows his gracious respects unto her. This was the Lord's own work, as was likewise that of old, that Laban should leave Jacob with a kiss. Let a man's ways please the Lord, and men shall quickly befriend him.—*Bishop Hall.*

This is truly heroic magnanimity, by which Esther declares as great a faith towards God as love towards his Church. Her trust in him is such that she incurs the peril of her life in obedience to his call. For though all the circumstances of the case threaten her destruction, still she hangs by faith upon the Divine promises. For whom God calls and leads into danger, to him he has also promised preservation and deliverance in those dangers. To Abraham he said, "Get thee out of thy country, and thy father's house." This was a call to face danger. But he also added the promise, "I will make of thee a great nation." It is love alone that exposes itself in behalf of the Church of God, and would rather risk its own life than leave the Church of God in danger.—*Brenz.*

Esther was not one of those who resolve and promise well, but do not perform. How ready are we, like the disobedient son in the parable, to say, We will go and work in the vineyard, and after all go not! But what excuse shall we have for breaking our promises

through the mere power of laziness, when Esther kept her word at the risk of her life? She deserves to be ranked with the noble army of confessors, if not of martyrs. She went in unto the king when a law faced her which declared it to be death for any subject, not excepting the queen, to go in unto the king's private apartments without his leave.

Nor did she linger in doubt whether she should go in unto the king or not. If she had, new temptations, dangerous to her virtue, might have assaulted her. Her resolution had been already formed, and she makes haste, and delays not to do the commandment of Mordecai, which she considers as a commandment from God. On the third day, she went in unto the king. Her fast did not, it seems, consist of three complete days and nights. In the language of the Jews, "three days and three nights" might mean one whole day and part of two others. Jesus is said to have been "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," and yet he is said to have risen "on the third day."

She observed her fast, and it was no sooner over than she went in unto the king. It was wise in her, when she had finished her supplication, to present her petition to the king. When Hannah prayed in the bitterness of her grief, her heart was eased; she was no more sorrowful. We have reason to think that Esther's anxieties, too, were banished by her devotion. She had been lifting up her soul to the Lord. She had been, doubtless, remembering her song in the night, and the wonderful works of former times would inspire her with hope of a happy event to her present enterprise. Thus she was able to approach unto the king with all that composure of mind, and cheerfulness of countenance, which were necessary for the occasion.

She put on her royal apparel when she went in to the king. She cared not for the distinction of her rank, and placed not her delight in the outward adorning of gold, and pearls, and costly array. But it was necessary to lay aside her mourning apparel, and to put on her beautiful garments when she went in to the king. Good wives will endeavour to please their husbands by a decency in dress, as well as other things that may appear little when they are not considered as means to gain an important end. The married women care, and ought to care, how they may please their husbands; and those women do not act as becometh saints, whose dress, or any part of their behaviour, naturally tends to produce disgust. Esther had a peculiar reason for dressing herself with her beautiful garments when she went into the king's presence. But all women are bound to please their husbands in things lawful and consistent, because the law of Christ binds them to reverence their husbands: and their husbands, if they are not fools, will not desire them to transgress the laws concerning dress, which two apostles have thought it necessary to record for their direction.*

The countenance of Esther at this critical moment was highly interesting to the king, her husband. Grief, anxiety, and pity, painted in her beauteous face, awakened his pity and attracted his love. She found favour in his eyes, and he held out to her the golden sceptre, the sign of grace and pardon, which Esther touched, in thankful acceptance of the offered mercy.

"As a prince," said God to Jacob, "hast thou power with God; and with men also shalt thou prevail." Esther had been weeping and making supplication, like her father Jacob, and had prevailed, and saw the face of the king as if it had been the face of God, and her life was preserved; and, what was still better, she had the happy presage of the preservation of the life of all her people, in that favour which was extended to herself. What wonderful favours from men may fervent supplication to God obtain! "If He be for us, who can be against us?"—*Lawson.*

Delays in matters of importance are to be deeply censured, and the weightier the matter the more censurable is procrastination. Who then can estimate the folly, the egregious folly, of delay in the concerns of a never-ending futurity! —concerns compared with which the weightiest affairs of time are less than

* 2 Tim. ii. 1 Pet. iii.

nothing! The next thing to delay is total neglect—to putting off to another opportunity, putting off altogether, and delays too frequently thus terminate. When a man is somewhat impressed with his danger as a violator of the Divine law, and a rebel against the Majesty of heaven, but seeks a more convenient season to devote himself to the grand work of salvation, he is as yet in the enemy's hand; the chain is not broken; he is in danger of wearing off his good impressions, of falling back to his former inconsiderateness, and of increasing the callousness of his heart. It is not always that hesitating between God and the world ends well—it is not always that they who halt between two opinions are led to say, The Lord, he is the God, and after him we will go. Oh, beware of delay.

Fasting, and prayer, and communion with God therein, are the true strength of the soul. They lift it above temporary danger, and fill it with holy fortitude. They are likewise the parents of spiritual activity and diligence. Esther is not the only character whom we find gathering holy boldness for perilous duties (iv. 16) through earnest supplications. When Jacob was returning from Laban, he prepared to meet his enraged brother, by first imploring the guidance and protection of God. He knew it to be his duty to go forward, and not to return to Mesopotamia, yet he could not go forward but at the peril of his life, and that of his wives and children. He nerved his soul, however, with strength suited to the emergency, by humbling himself before the mercy-seat of his God, and his fathers' God, and imploring his heavenly interference. He prayed and prospered. Jehoshaphat, surrounded by multitudes of Moabites, Ammonites, and others, sought for courage to meet them at the throne of grace. His eyes were upon God, and his heart was not afraid. He prayed and conquered. He prayed, and God made the battle his own, and triumphed gloriously: he sent forth his wrath, which consumed these uncircumcised hosts as stubble. And how did our Divine Master himself obtain that fortitude, which was needful for the mighty combat which was before him? How did he prepare for the most arduous enterprise that was ever undertaken? In the same way as the pious queen before us. He repaired to the garden of Gethsemane, and poured forth his soul "with strong crying and tears," and being heard in that he feared, he presented an undaunted face to his enemies, and entered on the conflict with holy earnestness and anxiety. "Rise," said he to his sleeping disciples, "let us be going, behold, he is at hand," &c. (Let us meet him: for I have prayed, and my prayers have been heard; I have prayed, and heaven is on my side.) Brethren, we know not what we lose—of what rich blessings we deprive ourselves, by not abounding in prayer. "We will give ourselves continually unto prayer." Abundant prayer brings joy to the heart, and "the joy of the Lord is our strength." What dangers should we deem too great to face, were our souls but thus filled with the presence of the Lord!—what services should we deem too arduous and self-denying! "Wait on the Lord, and He shall strengthen thine heart." "The love of Christ *constraineth* us to live no longer to ourselves, but," &c.

The goodness of God, in this case, to his fasting and praying servants, demands our attention. "And it was so when the king saw Esther the queen, standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand." God, in whose hands are all hearts, on many of which, however, he works to answer his own wise purposes, but not so as to change or sanctify them—God, we say, disposed the king thus courteously to treat the queen. She was not killed (iv. 11), but kindly invited to approach. The God, who made Esau embrace with fraternal affection him, whom a few hours before he designed to murder, to fall on his neck and kiss him,—made this selfish, capricious, and unreasonable monarch behave thus condescendingly to the queen. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he" often "makes his enemies to be at peace with him." "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

Now, let us take occasion, from this act of Ahasuerus, to consider the conduct of another King—the blessed and only Potentate, to whom be honour and power everlasting. Ahasuerus held out the sceptre to his queen, who had never offended him, nor been unfaithful to him; but Jehovah holds out his sceptre to the unfaithful. How wonderful the language, in Jer. iii. 1, on this point. "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice."—*Hughes.*

"Now it came to pass." These words call for special notice in a book which strikingly illustrates the providence of God both in regard to nations and individuals. They remind us that there is nothing stationary—that what comes is moving on. Seasons of trial and perplexity would be overwhelming if they had the character of fixedness. It is happily not so. As you have stood gazing on a mountain, bathed in sunlight, you may sometimes have observed a dark shadow creeping along the side of it, as though hastening to accomplish its mission, and quickly gliding away out of sight, leaving the landscape all the more beautiful because of your remembrance of it. So is it with what is painful and sad in providence. Events of this kind have come at intervals, but it was only to pass—not to abide—like the floating of little clouds between us and the sun; and when past, giving to human life, as to nature, a great richness and variety. Biographies are but commentaries on these familiar words. Indeed, men themselves but come to pass. "The workmen die, the work goes on." While the river is moving on, and we are observing the things which fringe its banks, and being differently affected by them, we are ourselves sailing on the surface of the waters, and being swiftly borne along to the great ocean of eternity. "Now it came to pass."

Three days had been spent by Mordecai and the Jews, Esther and her maids, in fasting and prayer; three days which were, in the experience of all of them, like the gathering up of spiritual strength, and the marshalling of spiritual forces to battle. It was not by carnal weapons that they were to contend against the cruel menace of the world, but by faith, and in dependence on the Lord of Hosts. —*McEwan.*

We all expect to see any gift we have bestowed upon another applied to its destined use, and the neglect of the gift is regarded by us as equivalent to a contempt of the donor. Now it was in presents of dress, and ornaments connected with it, that the Easterns displayed and still display their munificence; so that Esther, arrayed in her royal robes, going to cast herself upon the king's favour, just went to him in the way that would most vividly remind him that she was the creature of his bounty, as she had been the object of his love.

We may take an illustration here from our Lord's parable of the Wedding Garment. There is something in that parable which at first appears inexplicable. The persons who were brought in to the marriage-supper were those whom the king's servants had gathered together from the highways; and how, it may be asked, could the man be found fault with who had not on a wedding garment? Here, then, lies the solution of the difficulty. Dresses befitting the occasion were furnished to the guests, according to the custom of the time; and he who had not on the proper dress must have supposed that his own clothing was good enough, and must have rejected the offer of a garment suitable, which was made to him by the keeper of the king's wardrobe. For this contempt, then, he was righteously charged and condemned. And so in the case before us, Esther would have been subject to displeasure, and righteously punishable according to

the established law, if, when the king had furnished her with the apparel and decorations suited to her exalted station, she had appeared before him, as he sat upon his throne, in attire more homely. But she had too much wisdom, and too strong a sense of what was becoming and proper, to expose herself to challenge on such a ground; and hence her carefulness to come forth in all the splendour of her queenly dress and ornaments.

And now, with life or death depending on every step, and with a timidity that must have made her look more beautiful than ever, she comes within reach of the king's glance. He had not seen her for more than thirty days. The sight of her at that moment, and in that place, was altogether unexpected. Without having time for reflection, or for speaking to Haman, who no doubt was beside him, of this strange disregard of the courtly etiquette, his former love was rekindled in his heart by the sight of the beautiful vision. He smiled, and held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. She felt that she was safe, and so drew near and touched the top of the sceptre.

Thus far the simple words of the history conduct us; and those who were spectators of this strange scene, would see nothing more in it than a most daring adventure on the part of the queen, with a singular exhibition of good will on the king's part. But with the help of what is stated in the preceding chapter, we get a clearer light upon the whole scene, and can understand the real meaning of the words: "Esther obtained favour in the king's sight." The prayer and fasting of the three previous days had not been without fruit. A Divine influence had been put forth to touch the heart of the king; and, without knowing it himself, by that influence he was led—not only to forgive the queen's unwarrantable intrusion into his presence, but also, as we shall see, to grant her any request which she might make. Here, then, there is the dawning of the day of deliverance for the Jews.

Now, let us, before going farther, make some practical application of this part of our subject. 1. In the first place, this lesson is obviously to be taken from it, that when we are to engage in any special work or enterprise involving difficulty or danger, the most effectual way to gain the object we have in view is to seek help and direction from on high. No man, indeed, whose heart is really imbued with the fear of God, will fail every day to ask direction and a blessing in the conducting of his ordinary affairs. And this is one circumstance which makes a difference between the pursuits of the mere worldling and those of the Christian, although externally they may seem to be engaged in the very same kind of business.

But when there are momentous interests at stake, when things have to be done out of the ordinary course, then, we say, there ought to be a special application made for Divine assistance and guidance. This is not to supersede the use of such means as prudence and experience may dictate for the accomplishment of the end in view. On the contrary, one of the subjects of prayer in such cases is, that the mind may be enlightened and strengthened so as to lead to the selection of the best means. But then, with all this, the committing of the issue to the appointment of God is the right procedure on the part of all who believe in a Divine providence, and look up to the God of providence as their Father in heaven. Esther, although she fasted and prayed, did not neglect the duty of arraying herself suitably to her station, and as the honour of the king required her to do. But we doubt not, that as she put on her ornaments, and as she went with throbbing heart across the court which separated her apartments from those in which the throne stood, her thoughts were more in heaven than on earth. And from her example we learn, that the spirit in which we should conduct our most important affairs is, that of committing our way to God, while we endeavour not to be awanting in personal activity, and in the employment of such lawful means as seem most likely to promote our purpose.

2. In the second place, we learn from this part of the narrative, that there may be Divine influence at work upon the

heart and will even of those who have no personal regard for religion, by which they are unconsciously rendered instrumental in advancing the interests of God's people and of his cause. As has been already said, we cannot avoid connecting the sacred exercises in which Esther and her friends were engaged, with the turning of the king's heart toward her. And many other examples of the same kind might be selected from the sacred record. There is the memorable one in the case of Cyrus, when he was moved by the Lord to take compassion on the captive Jews, and to permit all of them who chose, to return to their own land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. There is another in the case of the same Artaxerxes who showed favour to Esther, to which reference is made in the book of Nehemiah. When this patriotic and pious man was troubled on account of the desolations of Jerusalem, he prayed fervently that the heart of the king might be affected so as to lead him to grant assistance for remedying the evils which were felt by the Jews who had gone to repair the waste places of the holy city. And the king was moved accordingly.

It does not follow from those cases, that the putting forth of Divine influence to incline these heathen monarchs to do what was for the good of God's people, implied any gracious operation upon their hearts in the way of delivering them from their deadly errors. All that can be inferred is, that God's creatures, high and low, are as the clay in the hand of the potter. But this conclusion is very manifest, that as the settlement of numberless affairs, in which the interests of God's people are concerned, rests upon the will of individuals who may not be naturally well disposed towards their cause; this is one direction which their prayers may well take, that God would overrule the heart and will of those enemies, so that the truth may prosper. In this way, in answer to believing and persevering prayer, the words of the Lord may still be, as they often have been, verified, that mountains of difficulty are removed: "The crooked things are made straight, and the rough places plain."

3. In the third place, from the verses under review, compared with the previous history, we may draw an illustration of some important principles in the economy of grace. I must, however, remind you here of a distinction which requires to be kept in view in all comments upon the Old Testament history, and in the illustration of Scripture generally—a distinction between truths evidently deducible from the historical narrative, and directly bearing upon subjects of belief and practice, which are applicable to all times and circumstances; and reflections suggested by certain portions of the history, but suggested by them, rather than manifestly designed to be taught by them. There has often been a tendency exhibited by interpreters of Scripture to spiritualize all the events recorded in it. And in many cases, it must be acknowledged, this has been so happily done, as to make us feel as if we were refreshed by water from the flinty rock. Yet we must never overlook the difference between truth directly revealed, and truth suggested merely in the way of illustration. Now, with these remarks, the point which I would have you for a moment look at here, as bearing upon the doctrines of grace, is suggested by the contrast between Esther's first appearance before the king and her appearance now in the manner above described. In the first instance, she sought not the aid of ornament, but appeared in simple attire. And just as she was she gained the king's heart. But now, when she is about to present an important request to him, a request involving life or death to herself and multitudes besides, she goes arrayed in the dress, and ornaments, and jewels, which were the king's gifts to her, that he might recognize his own love-tokens, and be moved to show favour again by the remembrance that he had shown favour before.

You will easily perceive the application we make of all this. The sinner at first casts himself upon the mercy of God in Christ, in all his natural worthlessness, feeling that he has nothing to rely upon for acceptance and favour but sovereign grace. And God, in accepting him, is moved solely by his own mercy; for

many others, who are more highly gifted, and who have many qualities that might seem to give them a preference according to human judgment, are passed by. Our heavenly King has no respect of persons, so far as birth and the external circumstances and condition of men are concerned; but, at the same time, his love is bestowed sovereignly. "He has mercy upon whom he will have mercy." But when his believing people go to him in their difficulties and troubles to implore his aid, then he recognizes in them, amid all their deficiencies, something of his own comeliness which has been put upon them. They may be labouring under fears and doubts almost as depressing as those by which they were weighed down when they first threw themselves at his feet imploring mercy to pardon. But they stand now in a different relation to him. He has been gracious toward them, and in their distress, although it may be the distress which is the result of conscious backsliding, he perceives his own marks, or, as the Scripture expresses it, "The spots of his own children," upon them, and as his own, he welcomes them, and graciously answers their requests.—*Davidson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 3—5

A LARGE OFFER AND SOME OF ITS CONSEQUENCES.

I. A sympathetic inquiry. The king's heart was touched by the aspect of beauty saddened, and he asks, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? What ails thee? What has brought that sadness on to thy lovely countenance? What has given thee that mournful look? Thou art more attractive in thy sadness; but still I would know the cause of thy grief, that I may remove it if possible." The young and the beautiful in sadness are especially touching. Why should the young suffer? Why should the beautiful have the glory of their loveliness eclipsed by sorrow? Why the tears and groans of infant life? Why the merry laughter of youth so soon turned into the wail of mourning? Why, because Haman and others have sinned. The curse of Haman has visited and pained the innocent heart of Esther. Sin is far-reaching. The first sin has reached from creation's dawn to the present hour, and will go on working to creation's final doom. Oh! we do not rightly consider the mischief we do, the pain we may cause, when we sin. By sin pain and injury are caused both to the sinner himself and to those who are seemingly far removed from the sphere of his influence. Esther's sorrow was the consequence of Haman's sin. Esther's sorrow touched the nature of Ahasuerus. Sympathy was evoked, and this sympathy found vent in the gracious inquiry and in the large offer. In the presence of sorrow, silence may be profound sympathy. If the heart is moved to utterance the words should be few and well-chosen. A truly sympathetic nature will suggest the right words, if indeed the nature be not so overcharged with sympathy as to be divested of the power of utterance. The better part of Ahasuerus comes out in this inquiry which he put to Esther, and is an illustration of the saying, There is good in all, while none are all good.

II. A large offer. Some people put the seemingly sympathetic inquiry, and yet do not follow it up with promises of help. Ahasuerus *felt*, which was good. Ahasuerus *promised* to help, which was better. "What is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." A large offer truly if it be only regarded as a mere proverbial expression. Proverbs have their deep meaning. A proverbial expression used as a promise must intend much on the part of the promiser. (*a*) A large offer may be made at the prompting of mere feeling, and when the feeling evaporates the promise is forgotten, or not considered binding. However, if the promise be legitimate and capable of fulfilment it ought to be performed, though it was made at the dictate of feeling. Be careful not to let feeling over-ride judgment. The man without feeling is not a properly developed man

The man all feeling loses the glory of his manhood. (*b*) A large offer may be made without a due consideration of the limiting nature of our circumstances. Ahasuerus might promise the half of his kingdom, but could he have granted it? Esther could not really have herself monopolized the half of that vast kingdom. We forget the limits of our circumstances and of our capacities sometimes in the largeness of our offers. Infinitude is not our attribute. Man is but a creature. There is truth in one view of the statement that man is the creature of circumstances. (*c*) A large offer may be made without a due consideration of the benefit of the promisee. If any one was likely to be benefited by large material possessions that person was Esther. Even she, however, might have suffered had she received what was thus offered. The deceitfulness of riches might have choked the good seed. Earthly love, as a mere sentiment, is sometimes blind both in its promises and in its bestowals. The blind passion of a mother has done much injury to her offspring. Heavenly love is never blind. Judgment and feeling shape the fashion of Divine promises. There are no limitations to the heavenly promiser. What he has promised he is able to perform. Divine promises always purpose; are intended to promote the highest welfare of the promisee. Let us receive Divine promises in all their fulness. Let us judge him who has promised to be both faithful and all-powerful.

III. A small request. For the present Esther simply contented herself with the small request, "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." (*a*) Our requests should be shaped with a view to the character and ability of the promiser. Esther was wise. She had a woman's sharp wit, and a woman's keen penetrating power. She saw that for the present this was all which she could likely secure from the hand of Ahasuerus. She must wait for the perfecting of the good work already begun in Ahasuerus. God's ability and willingness to give are large. But we too may have to wait. His purpose for us may not be ripe. At first he may give small blessings, the harbinger of yet greater blessings. His best things he gives last. The ruler of the feast said more than he meant, 'Thou hast kept the good wine till now." Let our askings be in harmony with Divine purposes, so far as we can understand them. (*b*) Our requests should be shaped with a view to our wants and to our circumstances. This was how Esther shaped her request. This was all she wanted for the present, and this was all that her circumstances would now allow her to obtain. We do not always know our true wants. The complexity of our circumstances baffle. Our first prayer is—"Lord, show us what we need; teach what our circumstances require. Adapt thy gifts to our necessities. Arrange thy blessings to meet the exigencies of our circumstances." Definite requests may be prompted by presumption as well as faith.

IV. A speedy fulfilment. Some promises are rashly made. After-consideration may reveal their folly. Yea, after-consideration may show that they are neither lawful nor binding. Herod made a foolish promise to the daughter of Herodias. Had it been his own head that was required, he would at once have seen the folly of his conduct, and refused the request. Neither the oath nor the company would have induced him to yield. When the promise, however, is legitimate it ought to be speedily performed even at the cost of the promiser. It was an easy thing for Ahasuerus to grant Esther her small request. "Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther has said." The weak king was capable of promptness. This is also a good trait in his character. Love induces zeal. Zeal is prompt in its actions. What zeal should possess the lovers of Jesus! And yet what laggards we are in attending the banquets of heaven. Let us make haste to the heavenly banquet. Let us earnestly bid others to the feast.

V. A consequent incongruous assembly. The king's great offer has a seemingly insignificant result. The king and Haman and Esther appeared together at the banquet. So far this is illustrative of human proceedings. Pretentious begin-

nings, small results. Look a little further, and we shall see that this is one of the links in the chain of circumstances leading on to the Divinely-purposed result. Very small are the links in the chain of Divine purposes. Small, but strong as adamant. What an incongruous assembly! The weak and mighty monarch. The wily and wicked Haman. The beautiful and virtuous and strong-souled Esther. The intended victim entertaining the victimizer. The victim will soon become the conqueror. She is now on the high road to victory. The victimizer will soon be caught in his own toils. Thus the banquets of earth bring together very opposite characters, and are fraught with unlooked-for results. There are not only social and intellectual, but moral, differences at earthly banquets. There is a banquet coming where there will be no disunion. In heaven there will doubtless be intellectual differences, but there will be no moral incongruities. The music of heaven is harmonious. Moral natures in heaven will be rightly adjusted. Heart will respond to heart in perfect unison, as harp answers to harp in the hands of angel performers. The wicked Hamans will not be summoned to the great and final feast. Whatsoever defileth shall not pass the pearly gates. Only the redeemed shall there be allowed entrance. Let us seek to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Divine Spirit, and keep in constant view the abundant entrance to heaven's glorious banquet.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 3—5.

It is not good to swallow favours too greedily, lest they either choke us in the passage, or prove hard of digestion. The wise queen, however she might seem to have a fair opportunity offered to her suit, finds it not good to apprehend it too suddenly, as desiring, by this small dilation, to prepare the ear and heart of the king for so important a request.—*Bishop Hall.*

And what is thy request?—q. d. "Fear not to utter it; I am very earnest to know it, and fully resolved to grant it." It was more troublesome to Severus the emperor to be asked nothing than to give much. When any of his courtiers had not made bold with him, he would call them and say, "What meanest thou to ask me nothing?" "Hitherto ye have asked me nothing (saith the King of Saints to his beloved Esther); ask, that your joy may be full." He is worthily miserable that will not make himself happy by asking.

It shall be given thee, to the half of the kingdom.—A proverbial rather than a prodigal speech, and much in this king's mouth. If some ambitious Semiramis had had such an offer, what ill use might she soon have made of it! The dancing damsel made no good use of the like from Herod. But a bee can suck honey out of a flower, that a fly cannot skill to do. Esther prudently and modestly improveth the immoderate offer of the king, and conceiveth good hope. How much more may we (upon those exceeding great and precious promises given us by God), of an exuberancy of love, and a confluence of all comforts for this life and a better; especially since God doth not pay his promises with words, as Sertorius is said to have done; neither is he off and on with his people, but performeth all with the better; as Naaman pressed the prophet's man to take two talents when he asked but one. The widow of Sarepta had more than she could tell what to do with; her cruse never ceased running till she had no room. The Shunammite would ask nothing of the prophet, nor make use of his offered courtesy. He sends for her again, and makes her a free promise of that which she most wanted and desired—a son. God's kindness is beyond all this. He giveth his servants what they forget or presume not to ask; and sends his Spirit to help them, and to form their prayers for them, and thereby to seal them up to the day of redemption, to assure them of the kingdom.

If it were policy in Esther to invite Haman whom she hated, was it likewise piety? did she not dissemble? R.

mon saith, she invited Haman alone with the king, that other courtiers might envy him, and so undermine him. But that is but a sorry excuse, neither doth Syra's allegation of her good intentions mend the matter. They answer better who say, that she invited him that she might accuse him to his face; and so cut off all matter of his excuse or escape. Hereby also she would show, saith Lavater, that she accused him, not out of wrath or revenge; but that she was drawn to it, and, as it were, driven by mere necessity.—*Trapp.*

To promise much is the universal custom of great men, but those keeping promises are few in number. It is far easier to obtain favours by an humble and modest behaviour than by sullenness and a boasting manner.—*Starke.*

Those two great monarchs made great grants and largesses, the one to Esther, the other to Herodias's daughter; but yet they were limited only to the half of their kingdoms; and the royal power in their kingdoms they meant still to retain and reserve wholly to themselves. But God, having placed Christ on his throne, bids him ask men to the whole of his kingdom, for God hath made him a king, sitting on his throne with him, not to share halves, but to have all power in heaven and earth.—*Goodwin.*

Oh the wonderful love of Christ! the wonderful bounty of his love! It was a royal offer of Ahasuerus to Esther, and a sign of great love! "What is thy request? it shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom." Ay; but Christ not only offers, but gives, not half, but whole, kingdoms; yea, whole worlds. But you will say, This is but a chimera, an empty notion; for we see there are none enjoy less of the world than those whom you say Christ loves. I answer, The world is not able to judge of true enjoyments. There are none that have a more real, and advantageous, and a less troublesome and dangerous enjoyment of the world than saints. And I prove it thus. We may be most truly said to enjoy that which we reap the greatest emolument from, and get the greatest benefit by, that can be imagined; but there are none that improve the world to such a real advantage as the saints; for the love of Christ has so ordered the world, and everything in it, as it tends to their happiness. And what greater benefit imaginable than happiness?—*Clarkson.*

In the country Carniensis of Spain, there is a river that shows all the fish in it to be like gold; but take them into your hand, they appear in their natural kind and colour. Such are promises and specious pretences of love in his mouth that would obtain his purpose; bring them to the touch, and thou shalt find all is not gold that glitters. Great boast and small roast will never fill the belly; he therefore that will engage himself into any great action, upon promise of great assistance, if he be not as sure of his friend's ability in power as readiness in will, he reckons without his host, and sits down with the loss.—*Spencer.*

But let us now make a brief improvement of the verses which have been considered. And here the train of thought suggested to us will have already occurred to the minds of some. It embraces two particulars: the largeness of the king's offer, and Esther's hesitancy at once to avail herself of it.

1. With respect to the largeness of the offer. "Even to the half of my kingdom," the king said, "will thy request be granted." This, we have remarked, was the language of exaggeration. But we have it declared, in the words of truth addressed by our heavenly Lord to his people: "Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Here there is no limitation, but whatever is needed to the completion of our true spiritual joy we are invited to ask in the name of Christ; and if we ask in faith, as we are elsewhere told, it will be given, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "All things are yours," it is said to believers; and it may well be said, since Jehovah gives himself to them as their God, and Christ is theirs and the Spirit dwells in them.

2. But then, secondly, as Esther was afraid all at once to ask what she most desired, so God's people are often slow or afraid to avail themselves to the full of their privilege of asking. Many are contented to live from year to year, with little more to uphold them than an indistinct hope that they shall reach heaven at last, when, if they would but take home God's promises in all their freeness and richness, they might be able to rejoice in him as their portion. Many even seem to think that it would be presumptuous in them to expect such comfort and enlargement of heart as they read that others have enjoyed; whereas the Scripture tells them that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, and that they are only straitened in themselves.

But perhaps it may be, that as Esther did not feel herself in a condition all at once to close with the king's most liberal offer, so some among us, for other reasons than the feeling that it would be presumptuous, may be exercised in the same way with respect to spiritual privileges. This point deserves a moment's notice. There are some professed followers of Christ who are not altogether prepared either to ask or to receive the full measure of privilege which he offers to his people. They have still some lingering desires after the world and its pleasures which they are unwilling all at once to renounce; and though they seem to have cast in their lot with the redeemed, they would rather have the process of self-renunciation and of sanctification to be gradual than summary. In a word, with their present feelings, they would be, I must say, unwilling, or at least afraid, to receive the large communications of grace which Christ has promised to bestow. Now this is a most dangerous state of mind, and cannot be otherwise designated than as a grieving of the Spirit of God. And if there be any here to whom the above remarks are applicable, I would beseech them no longer to sport with offered blessings—no longer to imagine that they can serve Christ and the world together. Esther only deferred craving all she wished, because that was the best way to obtain it in the end. But if you are unwilling to take all that you might have, because in that case you must bid adieu to certain pleasures which you desire to retain, then you provoke the Lord to withdraw from you altogether the sense of his favour, and to leave you in utter darkness.—*Davidson.*

"*What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.*"—What encouragement is here presented to those who are called to venture their lives, or their reputation, or their substance, in the cause of God! They shall not only have these preserved, but in one way or another increased. How often has God prevented the fears, and outdone the hopes, of his servants! It is the cowardice of Christians that spoils their fortune. Their fears kill them, and benumb, and palsy, and deaden their exertions for God and his Church. If we had more faith, and "added to our faith fortitude," our trials would be less, and our success greater. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" *

From the story of the unjust judge our Saviour took occasion to teach that "men ought always to pray and not to faint;" and, without wandering from the subject, I may surely take opportunity from this portion of history to inculcate the same duty. Did this haughty monarch hold out the sceptre, and say, What wilt thou, and what is thy request? and shall not God hear his own elect—his chosen spouse, crying to him day and night? Esther had to go into the presence of a proud imperious man, we to go into the presence of a God of love and condescension. She was not called; we are invited. She went in against the law; we have both precept and promise in our favour—yea, precept upon precept, and promise upon promise. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." She had no friend at court on whom she could rely, and

* John xi. 40.

the great favourite was the accuser of her brethren, the mortal foe of her name and race; we, even when we have sinned, and sinned after light and pardon, have an advocate with the Father, his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, who also is the propitiation for our sins. Esther was encouraged to ask to the extent of the half of the kingdom of Persia; we are encouraged to ask to the whole of the kingdom of heaven, with a life-rent on earth of all that is needful for us. Ought we not then to "come boldly to the throne of grace"? —*McCrie.*

She would act with calmness and deliberation, as one who waited and relied upon the leading of providence. The king broke the silence by encouraging her to speak, and promising to grant her petition whatever it was, even "to the half of the kingdom." There seems to be more implied in this promise than the loose language of exaggeration. It has been usual to interpret it in this way, but inquiry into the custom of ancient Persian kings presents it in a different aspect. It was customary for them, we are informed, to bestow grants or pensions to their favourites, "not by payments from the treasury, but by charges upon the revenues of particular provinces or cities." One province or city was charged with providing the particular favourite's clothes, another his meat, another his wine, another his jewellery, and so on, thereby enabling the person to live in great luxury and magnificence. Because of this charge laid upon special districts, they were called by the article which they had to supply, such as "The queen's girdle," "The queen's headdress," et cætera. And if we take into account this old custom, it is probable that the promise of the king to Esther amounted to this, that he would even lay the half of his kingdom under some burden or tribute for her special benefit. Perhaps this also was an exaggeration, but it gives to the words a significance which we should not otherwise have understood. "Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom."

Without branching out upon far fetched analogies, and remotely suggested themes, we would, for the sake of the comfort which it may afford, refer to ourselves as suppliants in the presence of our King. The Church is "the Lamb's wife." She has free access to the throne of the King of kings. O how timidly and doubtfully do believers sometimes draw near to him! It is as though they feared his royal sceptre, forgetting that it is the sceptre of mercy; as though they were apprehensive that he had taken away his love from them, forgetting that "having loved his own who were in the world, he loves them unto the end." He has no half-measures —no half-kingdoms to offer. He promises you the kingdom—wholly, willing, unreservedly,—and even chides you for having "hitherto asked nothing in his name," and encourages you to "ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." King Ahasuerus could not anticipate the request of Esther; after his own carnal heart he thought that it must be some additional temporal good. But our King knows all beforehand, and has provided for, and is ready to bestow upon, us all that we can need upon the earth, and all that we can desire to prepare us for heaven. And surely, if we require to be stirred to earnestness and importunity by the presence of a great cause, we all have it in the condition of our own hearts, the souls of others, and the salvation of the world. There are spiritual as well as natural laws, according to which God works—a law which requires that the husbandman should sow the seed if he would reap a harvest, and a law which requires that we should pray if we would obtain the blessing. By our own large spiritual necessities and the wants of the world around, as well as by the unstinted generosity and beneficence of our King, are we urged on all hands to abound more in prayer— "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us; God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."—*McEwan.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 6—8.

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER.

If in the book of Esther only this one passage were found we ought to feel that the book had not been written and preserved in vain; for it is a passage that has served good purpose in the way of illustrating and enforcing theological lessons. It is one of the passages that readily presents itself to the mind of those who wish to speak about prayer. In other passages it might appear as if the moral lessons were brought to the text instead of being naturally and logically deduced; but in this passage the mind at once seizes upon the subject, and reads from it a lesson on prayer. Following the plan of textual division and exposition we find here laid down ample directions for prayer.

I. There must be method in prayer. What is thy petition, and what is thy request? These are questions which the praying soul may well put to itself as it is about to approach the throne of grace. Self-examination is good, and it is especially beneficial as we are about to approach our God. Too many in these busy times simply content themselves with the idea that prayer is to be offered. Prayer with them is too much like the hurried salute given to a passing friend. Prayer with them is like the quick march of an army past the royal standard. It is a kind of offering presented in order to propitiate Deity. It is only counting beads strung on a cord. It is only as one turning a praying wheel. God does not require such offerings. He inquires, What is thy petition? And we too should ask ourselves the same question. Self-examination and meditation before prayer will give speed to our prayers, and enable us to derive benefit from the same. We go as beggars; let us understand what we want, and shape our requests accordingly. We go as children; let us try to perceive that we need light, and love, and guidance, and earnestly appeal to God for the required blessings. If at the close of closet prayer an angel were to appear and to ask, What is thy petition? how startled we should be, and we should have to answer, I was not thinking very much about it, only I felt that I should be uneasy if a few words were not said before I retired to rest. If God's angels were to stand some Sunday morning beside the thirty or forty thousand pulpits of our land, and say aloud to every minister, What is thy petition?—the ministers and the congregations would be surprised out of their inane proprieties. And if those angels had the power of making the true thoughts speak out, still greater would be the surprise. The Church minister might say, I had no request, I only thought of reading the prayers, and I did not even think much of the words written in the Prayer-book. In fact I was not conscious of being in a devotional spirit. The dissenting ministers would have varying answers. Some were earnestly pleading with God for a blessing, as some devout Church ministers do pray by means of written and read prayers. But what of others? Some might say, I was trying to be philosophical; some, rhetorical; some, beautifully simple; some, I was trying to reach my ideal of what prayer should be; and other some, a few it is hoped, I was imitating this one or that one noted for the beauty of his prayers. Surely modern Christianity would be a greater power in the earth if all, or a vast majority, were able to give a definite answer to the question, What is thy petition? God pity our weakness. He does pity; he bears long; he remembers those who do pray, a larger number than perhaps we sometimes think. Oh for more strength in prayer!—and this is gained by more method. God graciously asks, What is thy petition?—shall we not respondently inquire, What am I going to do? What blessings do I require? What is the urgent requisite for the assembly for whom I pray?

II. There must be assurance in prayer. Not merely the assurance that God is ready to hear prayer, but the assurance that we "have found favour in the sight of the King." Esther desired to feel her ground sure on this important point. How

shall we know that the King of heaven is favourable? We may know by looking to the unspeakable gift. "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly." May the Holy Spirit teach each one to know and to feel Christ died for *me* a sinner! We need not doubt the favour of God if we rest fully upon the Son of his love. In Christ we may know that it will please the heavenly King to grant our petition. "He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Here is a large charter of blessings. God's great gift of Jesus implies the gift of all things needful. It includes and surpasses every other charter of blessings. We cannot stand anywhere out of the reach of God's blessed "all things." The atmosphere seems to be an all-pervading force; but God's "all things" go even further, and are more enduring than that life-giving atmosphere. Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away; a fair reputation may be blighted; health may decline; friends may depart; relatives may become indifferent; even father and mother may forsake; death itself may come as if to complete the awful ruin; but still God's "all things" abide to the Christian amid every change, and in the midst of every disaster. Assurance in prayer, why should we ever doubt? Let boasting scientists talk; we are not careful, even if we were able, to answer them in this matter. We betake ourselves to prayer, and forget the babbling noise of opposing tongues. God's "all things" are vaster than the scientist's few things imperfectly understood. God's "all things" are deeper and higher, longer and broader, than philosophies falsely so-called.

III. There may be hesitancy in prayer. Not the hesitancy of doubt, but of deliberation. Preachers are sometimes exhorted to cultivate the pause in their sermons. All may with great advantage be exhorted to cultivate the pause in their prayers. The silent waiting of the Society of Friends is not without its instructive teaching to those who have too much fluency in prayer. Esther answered and said, "My petition and my request is;" then she stopped as if to think. The sentence is not properly punctuated if we look into Esther's mind. A full stop would be appropriate. There was doubtless a full stop in Esther's mind. "My petition and my request is." Oh, is there not prayer, the truest prayer, when the heart is too full for utterance? Unspoken prayers make more noise in heaven than "the greatest prayers" ever addressed to applauding audiences. "Now, let us have a few minutes' silent prayer," says the revivalist, at the close of an exciting address; and perhaps most of the people are not in a state for prayer. Many do not know what to pray for. Well, the silence will be beneficial after so much bluster. It can do no harm. The silence we desire is not that which is produced at the command of another. There must be the deep true silence of the soul. "Commune with your own heart, and be still."

IV. There must be submission to the Divine will in prayer. "I will do to-morrow as the king hath said." Here Esther answers the king, but she also answers the workings of her own devout mind. She is watching the leadings of providence; she is waiting for the finger of God to point the way in which she is to walk; she is intently listening for the Divine voice to speak to her in the silence of her prayerful waiting; she is in no hurry. To-morrow will do, if to-day the purpose is not ripe. To-morrow will do, if it is in God's hands. She will not limit the Divine to-morrow. Certainly we must not. Human to-morrows are easily measured. Divine to-morrows out-pass the petty measurements of time. The praying soul may desire the blessing to-day, but God may say to-morrow is best. Delay is part of the Divine plan in dealing with his people and his Church. The to-morrow sometimes seems a long way off, and a long time in coming. Let patience have its perfect work. The Divine silence will be broken. God is moving though we see him not, and though we hear not the tread of his feet. There are times in the Church's history when God seems to answer not a word, but ere long the Divine goings are heard. Let faith, patience, and prayer be continued till the Divine silence is broken. God sometimes in answering not a word to a prayer gives the best answer. He answers

not to the mere words but to the true purpose, and the lasting good, of him who sincerely prays. Silence, then, is not denial, but encouragement. May the good Lord increase our faith, strengthen our patience, enlarge our spirit of prayer, and crown all with Divine benedictions.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 6—8.

To make prayer of any value, there must be definite objects for which to plead. We often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other, and we get nothing, because in each we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any object. Do you not sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you mean to ask God for? You do, as a matter of habit, without any motion of your heart. You are like a man who would go to a shop and not know what articles he would procure. He may, perhaps, make a happy purchase when he is there, but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt. And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire, and get his end; but how much better would he speed if, having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination, he came to God for an object at which he was about to arrive, with a real request. Did we ask an audience at her Majesty's court, we should not be expected to go into the presence of royalty, and then to think of some petition after we came there. Even so with the child of God. He would be able to answer the great question: "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be done unto thee?" Imagine an archer shooting with his bow, and not knowing where the mark is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship, on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science or with treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make; how is it that you go to God without knowing what blessing you design to have?—*Spurgeon.*

And I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.—She had learned to prefer opportunity before time. There might be some by at this first banquet whose company she liked not; or she might not yet have so clear an answer in her own heart to her former prayers, and therefore desireth some further time that night to seek God; whatever the reason of her putting it off till next day was, God's holy hand was in it, that Mordecai might be first so greatly honoured, and Haman's high gallows prepared: Illum utique magis securum, Regem autem magis benevolum magisque fecit attentum, saith Rupertus. Hereby she made Haman more secure, and the king more kind and attent.—*Trapp.*

We may recognize the picture of a soul praying to God in the image of Esther standing with humble and imploring attitude before Ahasuerus. Sacred poetry, especially, has made use of single features or expressions of this history in this regard. So Dressler in his beautiful hymn, "My Jesus, to whom seraphim," &c., causes the pious supplicant to say:

> "Reach thy sceptre to my soul,
> Which like an Esther bows to thee,
> And shows herself thy bride to thee."

"Speak: 'Yea, thou art she whom I have chosen.'" The representative signification of the persons in this history have, as it were, brought with them their own recognition. The Christian may certainly employ them in this sense. So Starke, when he says: "If a heathen king can willingly grant such grace, how much more willing is the most faithful Lord to receive all poor destitute sinners coming to him in faith, and in the good time to come to place them upon his throne!" Ahasuerus paid no regard to the fact that Esther had violated his commandment, but received her very graciously, although his irrevocable edict stood in the way of granting her petition

The father heart of God, although we violate all his laws, and though his unchangeable holiness be against the sinner, still yearns towards us in its great love and grace. But just as Esther came boldly and yet modestly, so we also must combine with true humility a true and elevated courage, a disheartened repentance together with confiding faith. —*Lange.*

He that would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer. Praying only for carnal things shows a carnal heart, and leaves it carnal. Prayer is a key in the hand of faith to unlock God's treasures. A family without prayer is like a house without a roof—exposed to every wind that blows, and every storm that rages. Prayer will compel a man to leave off sinning, or sinning will make him leave off praying. The greatest and hardest preparation for heaven is within; but the spirit of prayer can effect this. Do you profess to love any one for whom you have never prayed? Rhetoric cannot pray, with all his words; but Faith can pray, even when she has no words. In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart. Pray, not only in the name of Christ, but in the faith of Christ. The gift of prayer may have praise from men, but the grace of prayer has power with God. —*American Churchman's Almanac.*

Let us need present help, and you shall see that he is "a very present help in time of trouble." Let the disciple be sinking amid the waves of Galilee, crying, "I perish"—let the prophet be on his knees in the depths of the sea and the dark belly of the whale—let the widow's last mite, and the barrel's last handful, have come—let the confessor be descending into the lions' roaring den—let the queen have her brave hand upon the door, with these words of high resolve upon her lips, "If I perish, I perish"—let the trembling host have the waters of the Red Sea roaring in their front, and the chariots of Egypt pressing on their rear—let God's people have reached such a crisis; let them stand in any such predicament;—and his answer anticipates their prayer. The supply is on the road before the want is expressed; the door opens before the hand has struck it; while prayer is travelling up the one line, the answer is speeding down the other. Hear the voice of the Lord: "It shall come to pass; before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Child of God! pray on. God's people are more dear to him than our children can be to us. He regards them with more complacency than all the shining orbs of that starry firmament. They were bought at a price higher than would purchase the dead matter of ten thousand worlds. He cares more for his humblest, weakest child than for all the crowned heads of earth, and takes a deeper interest in the daily fortunes of a pious cottage than in the fall and rise of kingdoms. Child of God! pray on. By prayer thy hand can touch the stars, thy arm stretch up to heaven. Nor let thy holy boldness be dashed by the thought that prayer has no power to bend these skies, and bring down thy God. When I pull on the rope which fastens my frail and little boat to a distant and mighty ship, if my strength cannot draw its vast bulk to me, I draw myself to it—to ride in safety under the protection of its guns; to enjoy in want the fulness of its stores. And it equally serves my purpose, and supplies my needs, that prayer, although it were powerless to move God to me, moves me to God. If he does not descend to earth, I—as it were—ascend to heaven. Child of God! pray on. Were it indispensable for thy safety that God should rend these heavens, it should be done—a wondering world should see it done. I dare believe that; and "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Have not these heavens been already rent? Eighteen hundred years ago, robed in humanity, God himself came down. These blue skies, where larks sing and eagles sail, were cleft with the wings and filled with the songs of his angel train. Among the ancient orbs of that very firmament, a stranger star appeared, travelling the heavens, and blazing on the banner borne before the King, as he descended on this dark and distant world. On Canaan's dewy ground—the lowly bed he had left—the eye of morning shone

on the shape and form of the Son of God; and dusty roads, and winter snows, and desert sands, and the shores and very waves of Galilee, were impressed with the footprints of the Creator. By this manger, where the babe lies cradled; beside this cross, upon whose ignominious arms the glory of the universe is hung; by this silent sepulchre, where wrapped in bloody shroud, the body is stretched out on its bed of spices, while Roman sentinels walk their moonlit round, and death—a bound captive—sits within, so soon as the sleeper wakes, to be disarmed, uncrowned, and in himself have death put to death—faith can believe all that God has revealed, and hope for all that God has promised. She reads on that manger, on that cross, deeply lettered on that rocky sepulchre, these glorious words: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And there lifting an eagle eye to heaven, she rises to the boldest flights, and soars aloft on the broad wings of prayer:

"Faith, bold faith, the promise sees,
And trusts to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says it shall be done."—*Dr. Guthrie.*

Prayer may be supplication, or thanksgiving, or confession. Or it may be simple intercourse. He that muses toward God prays. If you can conceive of a child in the presence of a parent most beloved that speaks, that is silent, that speaks again, that is again silent; now thought, now fancy, now feeling, in turn, as it were, wheeling the orb of its little mind round completely, so that on every side it receives light or gives light to the parent—the intercourse of that child with the parent is the fittest symbol of true prayer.

Prayer is the soul of a man moving in the presence of God, for the purpose of communicating its joy, or sorrow, or fear, or hope, or any other conscious experience that it may have, to the bosom of a parent.—*Beecher.*

It is right not to put off till to-morrow the duty of to-day, but it may be wise to defer to-day what can be done better and more hopefully to-morrow. The greenness of to-day may be ripeness to-morrow—the blossom of to-day may be fruit to-morrow,—and it is the policy of wisdom to know when to wait and when to act, not waiting too long nor acting too hastily; only to, but no farther than, the ripeness and the fruiting—"I will do to-morrow as the king hath said."

To-morrow! As little could Esther as Haman have divined what was to happen before to-morrow. By faith the Christian leaves to-morrow in the hand of God; but, confident in proud self, the worldly man doubts not but that to-morrow will be as this day, and yet more abundant. There are shadows which are thrown forward, losses and bereavements which make the whole of life more sombre and sad than it had been before; but if each to-morrow was to be known beforehand there would be shadows thrown backward as well as forward, darkening our joys and intensifying our sorrows. As the past has scarcely proved what we could have anticipated, so cannot we now antedate the future. It is well that it should be so—well if, like Esther, we are exercising faith in God, and well too if, like Haman, we are drawing near his signal judgment. Let us advance upon each to-morrow as though to-morrow may be our last, and our last to-morrow will not take us by surprise. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get again. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow."

"Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart." Be not so cruel as speak to him of to-morrow! Let the wicked enjoy their bright to-day—it is the only bright to-day which they will ever have. It was different with Lazarus than with the rich man in the parable. To the one the last to-morrow was a day of comfort, but to the other a day of dread decision and despair. And ah! how different the to-morrow of Mordecai and his inveterate enemy Haman. The sun is about to rise on the one, just as it is setting on the other. Without farther anticipating that to-morrow, we know not whether to congratulate the

pious Jew the most, or to pity and commiserate the haughty Agagite. They meet to-day, and they shall meet again to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow! Let worldly men fear and prepare for their last to-morrow! "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—*McEwan.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 9, 10.

The Superficial Man.

We can readily picture Haman going forth from the royal banquet with glad heart, with elated step, and haughty mien. Not more proudly did Nebuchadnezzar walk in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and gaze upon the mighty city with feelings of self-laudation, than did the wicked Haman go forth from the palace that was in Shushan, and congratulate himself on his success. And not more certainly did pride have a dreadful fall in the case of Nebuchadnezzar than it was destined to have in the case of Haman. Now he is glad, but soon his gladness is turned into the wailing of discontent. Now he is proud, but soon he will be humbled.

I. Haman's gladness. "Then went Haman forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart." Haman's gladness arose from a false estimation of himself. He vainly fancied that the banquet was in his honour. He regarded all the costly and painful preparation as a fitting homage to his own self-importance. These kinds of false estimates are not peculiar to the Hamans. The poet may exhort, but the poet does not give the power, to see ourselves as others see us. Perhaps after all the power would not be so beneficial. Many a man would be less useful if he saw himself through other people's spectacles. Still exaggerated views of self are harmful. A true estimate of self, with firm dependence upon God, and an earnest desire to do our duty, will furnish the most lasting satisfaction. Haman's gladness arose from a false estimate of his position. We are sometimes never less safe than when we feel most secure. It is not to be supposed that a doubt crossed Haman's mind as he passed away from the royal presence. He did not perceive the dark shadow dogging his steps. Many are glad instead of being sorry because they take false estimates of their position. They build on the sand, and not on the rock. Happy the man who builds on the rock Christ Jesus! Here is abiding gladness. Here is heavenly calm. Here is enduring safety. Thus Haman's gladness was superficial, and consequently transitory. The rapturous gladness of earth is superficial and transitory. The chastened gladness of the soul resting upon Christ is profound and abiding.

II. Haman's use of his eyes. He saw, but he did not see deeply; he did not see correctly. Pride had cast a film over his mental vision. He saw only Mordecai's stubbornness. He did not see that the stubbornness rightly read meant integrity of purpose. He did not see glorious heroism in that unbending form. Prejudice lessens the power of vision. Green-eyed jealousy cannot possibly see correctly. A vast deal of suffering would be saved if eyes were used in a right manner. Men see and yet do not see. Seldom do men see one another justly. We either see too much or see too little. Most see through other people's spectacles. We see virtue and genius in the man who has a reputation. We see a repellent sight in the Jew who sits unbendingly at the king's gate. Let eyes be allowed to do their own proper work.

III. Haman's consequent change of state. The eyes affect the heart. Haman saw, and Haman became full of indignation. Had Haman seen correctly he would have been full of admiration. A false use of the eyes has its penalties. No God-given power or faculty, whether physical, intellectual, or moral, can be perverted

or misused without bringing retribution. There is an indignation which is righteous, and there is an indignation which is unrighteous. When we see tyranny, oppression, and vice flaunting itself in high places, then we do well to be full of indignation. But when we see integrity in low places; when we see a man determined to be honest though it may mean poverty; a man who resolves not to cringe to wickedness, and not to fawn upon and to flatter even royal sinners, then we do badly to be full of indignation. There is so much false propriety in the present day that we are not allowed to be indignant. Zeal is rude. Zeal must never violate the proprieties of polite life. A man's indignant feelings must never get the better of his self-control. If a man can be zealous and not run counter to æsthetic rules, and not hinder his success, well and good. But woe to the man who lets zeal get the better of discretion!

IV. Haman's power of self-control. "Nevertheless, Haman refrained himself." Haman had evidently some of that power which would have fitted him to take his place in modern polite society. He could keep his feelings in subjection when it served his purpose. Perhaps if Mordecai had met him at the banquet Haman could have carried on a conversation with the man whom he thoroughly hated. Too many set Haman before them as an example. They refrain themselves. Words smoother than butter are on their tongues; war is in their hearts. With the mouth they kiss; the concealed dagger is in the hand. Hail, master! is the voice of the betrayer, but the meaning of that voice is too often only known to the Divine. The power of self-control for the time being, however, is not to be despised. But the power of perfect self-conquest is a noble achievement. Haman should not only have refrained himself, but subdued himself. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

V. Haman's resource in trouble. He went home, and consulted his friends and his wife. Happy the man who can feel that his home is a place of refuge; who can go there and forget his sorrows. This is wonderful, that thoroughly bad men have attached to themselves wives who have stuck to them in all calamities. However, Haman's home was not a safe place, for his wife was evidently a bad woman. Only a good true wife can make a good home; a safe place when troubles come. Haman's resource in trouble should not be ours, or at least not our only one. A wife may be wicked; if not wicked she may be weak. The best wife may lead us wrong. Jesus Christ has love dearer than that of fondest wives. Earthly friends may be false, or if not false, unwise. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. There is a friend who knows how to help in, and deliver from, trouble. Let prayer to the great High Priest be our resource in trouble. And then when we pass away from the homes of earth we shall go to the home of the blest, where Mordecais cannot trouble.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 9, 10.

And with a glad heart.—But he rejoiced as many more do in a thing of nought. And the end of this his mirth was heaviness. It was risus sardonius, like that of those, who being stung with the tarantula (a viper in Italy), die laughing and capering. Or as the dolphin, that sporteth most before a storm. Or as the little fishes, that swimming merrily down the silver stream of Jordan, fall shortly after into the Dead Sea. Haman doubtless held himself now the happiest man alive; as having the royalty, not of the king's ear only but of the queen's too, as he foolishly fancied. This wicked one boasted of his heart's desire, and as for all his enemies, he puffed at them. He said in his heart—I shall not be moved, I shall never be in adversity. Herodotus saith of Apryes, king of Egypt, that he conceited and bragged that his kingdom was better settled to him than that any, either God or man,

could remove him; yet was he afterwards taken and hanged by his own subjects. Ælian tells us, that Dionysius, the tyrant, thought it impossible that he should have been cast out of Italy, but it proved otherwise. How suddenly were Alexander, the great conqueror, and Julius Cæsar, the perpetual dictator, cut off, and quenched as the fire of thorns. Sic transit gloria mundi. The world's greatest dealings are in no better condition than the bull that goes to be sacrificed with garlands on his head, and music before him, but suddenly feels the stroke of the murdering axe.—*Trapp.*

Then went Haman forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart.—This is true to human nature, to common fact. A man's heart may be black as hell with lying, treachery, and murder, yet there are times when he is joyful; moments when everything goes according to his wish; even when, as now, unsought smiles are shed on him. The future is hidden in the blaze of present light; vengeance, treading close behind, is "shod with wool" and unheard. It is a ghastly fact, profitable to be observed, when it comes in our way. "That day!" Before the next, Haman will be hanged high on his own gibbet. Haman's gladness did not last him home, for Mordecai, his sackcloth laid aside, was again at his post. He had fasted to good purpose, having regained quietness of mind.

Haman strutted forth in all his magnificence, drinking with greedy eyes the obsequious homage of the menials; but in a moment a black scowl of rage eclipsed the simper of gratified vanity. How small this great man was! It would appear that he had expected Mordecai to bow at last. But there Mordecai sat unmoved, not pointing the finger at Haman, not calling him traitor or murderer, but not standing up or moving—a spectacle to men and angels. Possibly he was pondering these words of Zophar: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short?"—*A. M. Symington, B. A.*

God restrains men's lusts, either by wisdom, as is said of Haman, that he restrained himself. Yea, many times one lust restrains another. "He restrains himself" (speaking of a covetous man), "and bereaves his soul of good." One lust eats up another; yea, sometimes and often God doth restrain by the immediate work of his own Spirit, by the gift of continence; for there is a spirit put into every man by nature of moral virtues, by which the Lord restrains the corruptions of nature. And though naturally men are filled with all unrighteousness, and every lust is as a hole to let it out, yet God oftentimes stops and plugs up the holes as he pleaseth, that they may not run out at every hole. God doth not broach every lust in every man, yet so as in some man or other, all corruption is broached; some in one and some in another; and in all the barrel is no less full. And though there be a sluice to keep in the water, though there be a less stream, yet there is nevertheless water; even so, though lusts be restrained, yet there is nevertheless corruption within; so that God's restraining of men's lusts is no argument to prove that therefore they have not all sin in them.

Natural wisdom, which doth both assist conscience, and help to strengthen these moral dispositions, and assists against many sins, so Haman, though his revenge began to boil, and was ready to break forth, and he was exceedingly wroth with Mordecai, yet notwithstanding he was kept by his wisdom from present revenge, for he thought to take a fitter opportunity for it afterwards; it is said, "he refrained himself." So Saul, his natural wisdom moved him to moderation, for though a band of men, whose hearts God had touched, followed him, yet there was a company of the children of Belial, who said, "How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace;" that is, Saul winked at this, and did not go about to revenge it, for his natural wisdom told him that it was best for him to be silent until he had made his party good.

Fleshly wisdom is a great princi-

ple by which the world is guided. — *Goodwin.*

It were a blessed thing if, in matters which affect the interests of religion and practical godliness, the followers of Christ would exhibit the same kind of firm determination as we read of in the case of Mordecai. There would then be a more decided separation between the Church and the world, and less of tha tendency to combine the two services of Christ and the world which prevails among us so extensively. If men were estimated according to their real character, and treated rather as their moral worth merits, than with deference to their wealth — if the true elements of greatness, such as the fear of God, the love of truth, and unbending adherence to Christian principle, were honoured by those who profess to follow Christ, and the opposite qualities were visited with the disapprobation they deserve, then the Church would occupy her proper ground, and her members, although hated by the world, would be the object of its secret respect.

"When the all-influential man of power saw the Jew in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai." He had come out from the banquet, we are told, joyful and with a glad heart. And no wonder; for the honour which had been conferred upon him, of being invited to such an entertainment, was higher than usually fell to the lot of the most exalted subject. He seemed now to be secure in the possession of his dignities and influence, when he stood so high in the favour both of the king and of the queen. Visions of still greater grandeur and wealth than he had yet attained floated before his mind; and as he passed along, receiving the profound homage of the servile crowd of attendants, who knelt as he approached, and shaded their eyes, as if it had been presumptuous to look upon the face of so great a man, he was the more puffed up with a sense of his own pre-eminence. But all at once he comes to the spot where Mordecai sits, and here his triumph ends. The Jew takes no more notice of him than if he were the humblest officer about the court, excepting that there is in his countenance an expression of contempt, and perhaps of dislike. This scorn is like a dagger in Haman's heart. All the feelings of self-gratulation which he had so pleasingly cherished, and the visions of yet higher honour which he was to attain, are at once dissipated, and he retires to his house, with the mingled passions of anger, and hatred, and revenge burning in his bosom. It is remarkable, and it is profitable to notice, how completely worldly men lie at the mercy of very trifling incidents for the preservation of their comfort and happiness. A circumstance in itself of no importance, falling out unexpectedly, will have the effect of disturbing and deranging the whole train of their enjoyments. A little matter, which you would think scarcely worth their notice, is poison in the cup of their pleasures, and converts their satisfaction into exquisite misery. Haman's case finds many parallels. We have referred to the subject before: we may allude to it again. From the banquet and the gay assembly, from which it might have been supposed that all vexation, and care, and trouble would be excluded, the votaries of fashion frequently part with such bitterness of spirit, as to make them the objects rather of pity than of envy. A supposed slight, a contemptuous glance, a suspicious whisper, a preference shown to some other party over them by those whose favour and patronage are regarded as of consequence, will throw a deep cloud of disquietude and discontent over the minds of those lovers of vanity, which distresses them more than many of the real ills of life would do. In this way it is that the proud, and vain, and frivolous are partly punished, even in this life, for their sin and folly They carry about in their own breast the materials which, by a just retribution, turn their sweetest enjoyments into gall and wormwood.

The chief lesson which is evidently deducible from the verse before us is founded upon the contrast between the two individuals mentioned in it- -Mor

decai and Haman;—between the servant of God and the wicked enemy of God's people. Mordecai occupied the subordinate place; and not only so, but he was, with all his countrymen, doomed to death in consequence of the royal edict. He had done good service to the king, even to the preservation of his life, but for that service he had received no reward. If he had been of morbid temper, he would have been dissatisfied on this account: and more especially, with the prospect before him of the coming evil, he would have been unfitted for all his ordinary duties. Only three days before he was running about in sackcloth—wailing, and refusing to be comforted. But now he is in his ordinary dress, and in his usual place, as calm and composed as if all his affairs had been most prosperous, and with as independent and manly a spirit and as unabashed countenance as if he had had nothing to dread. We may truly say of him, then, that in the midst of his trials he was happy. There, again, is Haman, who is the next man to the king, and who really possesses more power, because he can mould the king to his purposes. Rank, wealth, and honour are his, sufficient, it might be thought, to satisfy the most ambitious mind. Thousands bow before him,—his will is law,—the lives and destinies of millions are in his hand,—he can rule everything but his own spirit. Here, however, he is a slave—a slave to fiendish passions. And in consequence of this, because Mordecai the Jew would not do him reverence, he is frantic with rage. He forgets all the real benefits he enjoys by reason of the slight put upon him by this one man. It needs no argument to prove which of these two persons is truly the greater character, and which of them is most entitled to our respect. But how, it may be asked, came Mordecai to be able to bear with such equanimity the pressure of real trouble, while his enemy was all discomposed by an imaginary wrong, or by that which, if it was a real injury, he could so well afford to overlook? The answer to this question is easily given. Mordecai's heart and mind were under the influence of the word of God. He had committed to him the whole issue of that affair in which all the Jews were so deeply interested. He could thus look forward with good hope to a happy deliverance from danger, through the interposition of the God of Abraham, who had told his people that he was the shield and the reward of all who trusted in him. Mordecai, therefore, possessed his soul in patience, assured that some outlet would be found from the threatened danger. Haman, on the other hand, was destitute of all fear of God, and unaccustomed to lay any restraint upon his passions, except when self-interest prompted him so to do. His success in life had only stimulated the evil principles of his nature, and rendered him haughty, imperious, and revengeful, where he had power to gratify his dispositions. He was therefore capable of any villany, and incapable of enjoying the blessings of his condition, as all must be who are strangers to self-government.—*Davidson.*

Haman refrained himself.—It is a circumstance not unworthy of notice, that even those persons who are habitually self-willed, and destitute of the power of self-government, can nevertheless, when occasion requires it, exercise a wonderful control over both their speech and their passions. Thus, for example, a man who is addicted to the sin of profane swearing, will be found to put such guard upon his words in the presence of a superior who detests that sin, that not one oath will escape from his lips. A man who has no command of his temper at ordinary times, will appear smooth and unruffled in his intercourse with those on whom he is dependent, or whose good opinion he desires to gain. A man given to excess in the indulgence of his appetites, will be careful not to transgress in company where it would be accounted shameful. Now there is an important principle involved in all this, deeply affecting the moral responsibility of such men for all their conduct. For if they can lay themselves under such restraint—when it serves their purpose—that long-formed habits can be checked and mastered, then we think that even they themselves must

admit that they are deprived of all excuse when they suffer themselves to be usually governed by these habits. And if regard for the opinions and feelings of their fellow-men exerts a power over them which the law of God does not possess, then manifestly they are chargeable with the guilt of standing more in awe of men than of God. These remarks have been suggested by the words of the text, that "Haman refrained himself." Sorely galled as he was by Mordecai's contemptuous look and attitude, he did not openly give vent to his passion. It must have been a hard struggle; but he contrived to conceal his wrath, so as to appear in the sight of all the king's servants calm and dignified, as became his exalted station. And very probably it was this feeling, that he had a character to sustain, and that it would have been beneath his dignity publicly to notice the affront that he had received from a Jewish slave: it was this that prevented him from giving way to the rage that swelled in his breast.

Then went Haman forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart.—The wickedest of men may be not only prosperous, but joyful; though their hands are stained with blood, though their thoughts may have been "devising inquity on their beds, that they may practise it when the morning is light," * yet they go forth with a glad heart and a light step. With consciences as black as hell, they are not afraid to look on the unsullied orb of day, or to be seen by the moon when she walks in brightness. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, especially when it is cherished by prosperity. "They are corrupt, they speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. They say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." This has often been a source of bitter distress to good men, who have been "envious at the foolish, when they saw the prosperity of the wicked." But this is their infirmity, and they are brought to confess it. Why should they envy that joy which dwells in a guilty heart—that prosperity which betrays them to their ruin? There is greater reason for deriding them; for "the triumphing of the wicked is short." What a pitiable object would Haman be in the eyes of Esther that day, when she viewed him from the lattice of her window, as he left the palace! "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." †

Then went Haman forth THAT DAY *joyful, and with a glad heart.*—That day was the last of his gladness; next morning's sun should not set before all his glory was laid in the dust. Nay, that very day, and that very moment when it was most buoyant, his joy was destined to suffer a dash from which it would never completely recover. Before he left the court of the palace, from which he had come out with such uplifted spirits, a dart entered his liver, and inflicted a wound, which the zeal and art of all his physicians could not heal. *But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.*

There's a picture! standing out in bold relief, and contrasted with that of the proud but worthless premier. The one haughty and enraged; the other humble, but composed and dignified. It is not the port, the state, the pageantry; it is not the rank, riches, or power the mind and spirit—*that* is the man. The person who occupies the place of a common porter may have within him a soul that towers in real greatness far above that of the proudest and most titled grandee. He may have that within him, which, while it rouses the indignation, quails the courage of him who has armies at his beck. He who is conscious of acting rightly, has no reason to grow pale at the sight of danger. He who is embarked in the cause of God and his people, and whose conscience acquits him of having failed in his duty to his prince, or of having done evil to any man, feels himself clad in the

* Micah ii. 1.

† 2 Kings xix. 21.

panoply of heaven, stands fearless and scathless, is immovable in his purpose, and will not do a mean or unworthy, far less a sinful, thing, to save his own life, or the lives of those whom he holds dearest.

Such was Mordecai. He had had ample leisure to reflect on his conduct in refusing the homage claimed by Haman. That refusal had drawn down the vengeance of the wicked favourite on himself and his people. But still Haman is "contemned in his eyes as a vile person." He exhibited no tokens of positive disrespect. He would not insult him, he would not rail upon him as he passed, or behind his back. But he would not yield him any direct homage; "he stood not up, nor moved for him." An ordinary patriot would have been disposed to act in a different manner. He would have said, "My daughter is employed in using means for obtaining from her royal husband a revocation of the decree for the slaughter of the Jews; but she has to contend against powerful influence. I will endeavour to smooth her difficulties; and much as I despise this minion, I will for once abase myself before him, and try to assuage his resentment and propitiate his favour, by offering him that obeisance which is so grateful to his pride." Moses did not act on this principle, when Pharaoh, awed by the plagues which he had suffered, offered to allow the Israelites to go, provided they left their flocks and herds behind them: "There shall not an hoof be left behind!" Our Saviour did not act upon this principle, when the Pharisees said, "Get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." "Go, tell that fox, behold, I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nor would Mordecai act upon this principle. Haman had devised a deed which created horror both in heaven and earth; the devoted Jews were cast on the special protection of Providence; Mordecai was persuaded that enlargement and deliverance would arise to them from some quarter, and he entertained sanguine hopes that Esther had come to the kingdom for this very end. He would not, therefore, displease God, and dishonour himself, by having recourse to the mean expedient of cringing to the author of his country's wrongs, lest the day of their deliverance should witness his own destruction and that of his father's house.

This conduct on the part of Mordecai exceedingly enraged Haman. Perhaps he had heard of the distress into which the object of his hatred had been thrown by the decree for exterminating the Jews, and therefore expected, the next time they met, to see him grovelling in the dust. But when he found his independent spirit unbroken, and that he neither rose up nor moved at his approach, he boiled with indignation, and his wounded pride demanded instant revenge. "Oh that I had of his flesh! I cannot be satisfied." *

"Proud and haughty scorner is his name that dealeth in proud wrath." Pride was the first sin that entered into the universe. It was pride that turned angels into devils. It was pride that, after thinning heaven and peopling hell, invaded our world, and drove man out of paradise. It was pride that caused the first-born on earth to embrue his hands in the blood of an only brother. Pride has broken the peace of families and nations, and carried fire and sword through the earth. It is equally the parent of oppression and licentiousness, setting the father against the son, and the son against the father; the master against the servant, and the servant against the master; the sovereign against his subjects, and the subjects against their sovereign. Pride has marred the work of God, given birth to infidelity, apostasy, impiety, blasphemy, and persecution; it is the mother of heresy, and has fomented strife and contention, and wrath, and swellings, and tumults, within the sacred enclosures of the house of God. O beware of giving place to this monster! The man that harbours pride in his heart, harbours a murderer, a fratricide, a parricide, a suicide, a *deicide;* —for it crucified the Lord of glory, and still crucifies him afresh in his doctrine and in his members."—*McCrie.*

* Job xxxi. 31

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 11 and 13.

The Discontented Man as a Reckoner.

The discontented man is a poor hand at accounts. He cannot reckon up correctly either his own affairs or the affairs of other people. He is apt to give himself credit for too few blessings, and other people credit for too many blessings. His distorted imagination plays strange freaks. In looking at himself it is a diminishing power, and in looking at other people it too often becomes a magnifying power. The advantages of his own position are ignored, while the advantages of others are brought into undue prominence. It is not merely that he thinks that he gets less than he deserves, and other people get more than they deserve; but putting the matter of desert on one side, he sees himself destitute and forsaken, though surrounded with many of this world's good things; and others as rolling in affluence, as clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, and as having more than heart can wish. On close examination we shall find that this was the case with poor Haman. He does not here give us his views about other people, but the view he gives of himself is in one aspect very incorrect, and may warrant us in supposing that the view he would have given of other people would be but equally incorrect. Let us, however, seek to take just views of ourselves, of God's dealings with us, and of the world at large. Divine grace in the heart is the power by which the balancing faculty will be able to work correctly. Subjection of the human will to the Divine will must tend to give calmness and satisfaction in this, after all, unsatisfactory world.

I. **The discontented man is a good reckoner, up to a certain point.** Here Haman reckons up the advantages of his position, and the sum is rightly laid down. There are four leading items in the statement. Look at them: riches—children—position—honour. What more would a man be, and what more could a man desire? Certainly the man who looks for happiness to the material and the sensible can scarcely mention anything else that is desirable in order to the perfection of human happiness. Why, these are the very things that represent the ideal of happiness to a large majority of men. A man who is able to say as much of himself as Haman could say of himself would be the man to be regarded with envious eyes not only in Haman's days, but in Queen Victoria's days, and in this Christian country. We talk about angels preferring to visit the cottage where piety reigns, and where the sacred hymn of praise is devoutly sung; and yet the song sung by Haman in recording his greatness is the one to which the majority the most devoutly listen, and the one they most desire to sing. We speak about God's blessing resting upon the home of the pious poor, but the poor man is still despised, and his words are not heard; while the man who can tell of the glory of his riches, and his influence at Court, is honoured; his feeblest words are recorded as if they were the utterances of a Solomon; he is sent to Parliament; he is made a director of a railway company, and he is the chairman of a Christian assembly, if he will condescend to patronize that which should not bow the knee to this world's Baal. A small amount of goodness as well as of wisdom goes a long way when it is backed up by the "glory of riches." However, we must not forget poor Haman; poor, after all, like too many more, in the midst of his riches. We have every reason to suppose that Haman stated the case correctly. His riches must have been great to be able to promise the sum he did to the king as a compensation for the destruction of the Jews. We read of ten sons. His influence at Court was evidently supreme, and it was true that he only was invited to the banquet that Esther had prepared for the king. Up to a certain point, then, the discontented man can reckon correctly. We may have seen him at the computation; the whole was stated

accurately; and yet the result is false. How is this? How was it in Haman's case?—how is it in many cases from that day to the present time?

II. The discontented man is a bad reckoner, for the following reasons: (*a*) *He places too high an estimate on the mere material.* Wicked as Haman was he felt that these material blessings could not satisfy the cravings of his soul. Poor fellow! he blamed Mordecai, and did not seem to understand that he himself was seeking for happiness and for satisfaction where they are not to be found. The material was to fill and to satisfy an immaterial nature. We all place too high an estimate on the material. Not only our moral but our social reckonings will lead us to false conclusions if we do not give to the material its proper value. What is the meaning of the unrest and the discontent in our modern life? They are caused by too high an estimate being placed on the material. The soul cannot feed on money; good and useful as it undoubtedly is in its place. The soul cannot rest on the lap of worldly honours. The soul must rest in God if it is to obtain perfect repose. The soul must find the true riches if it is to be delivered from poverty. (*b*) *He does not take into account the unknown quantity.* There is often an unknown quantity absent from human calculations, and by careful scrutiny we might very possibly find it out, and thus it would be an unknown quantity no longer. The unknown quantity in Haman's case was the favour that he supposed he possessed with Esther. "Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself." Surely Haman might have got to know that he was not likely to stand well with Esther. Had he never heard of the relationship that existed between Esther and Mordecai? Was he not shrewd enough to guess that the man who persecuted Mordecai also persecuted Esther? It may be well supposed that success had blinded Haman. He did not use his eyes aright. It may be that a correct knowledge of this fact, and a right use of the knowledge, might have saved him from destruction. Is there an unknown quantity in our lives?—a something absent from our calculations which spoils the correctness of our reckonings? We have not thought of it before. It is just the very thing to give rounded perfection to existence. Look attentively inside and outside, all round about, to find out that which prevents you living in safety, or reaching that happiness which may be possible to you in the present state. The absent quantity in most lives is the salvation of the gospel. Without Christ Jesus in the heart, the hope of glory, a man cannot reckon up so as to come to a satisfactory conclusion. This it is which is needful to make up the perfection of our nature. (*c*) *He over-estimates his own deserts.* If it be true that there is good in all, while none are all good, then there was good even in wicked Haman. Whether this be so or not, it is sufficient for our present purpose that Haman acted as if he thought he had deserts. The blessings he here enumerates he takes for granted, as if they were no more than he deserved; while the refusal of Mordecai to render homage is considered not as arising from Haman's want of goodness, but from Mordecai's stubbornness. If Haman had rightly considered himself, he would have bowed to Mordecai instead of being offended that Mordecai did not bow to him. More humility on Haman's part would have saved his feelings, and might very possibly have prevented his downfall. What a different picture Haman would have made in history if he had asked himself, Who am I that all this has been done to me? Who hath made me to differ? Haman's fault is the glaring fault of most We intone the words, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," and then we go away and whine and complain if the rod of correction be applied in order to make us obedient children. Why should miserable sinners have riches, and children, and position, and honours? Why should miserable sinners complain if it is not found possible to make the best of this world? Is it to be regarded as an uncharitable statement if we affirm that those who neglect Jesus Christ as Mediator over-estimate their deserts? Certainly many fancy themselves whole who have urgent and pressing need of the help of the good Physician. (*d*) *He is bad at subtraction.*

He enumerates his blessings as four, and his drawback as one. He subtracts one from four, and makes *nothing* the strange result. Mordecai sitting at the gate is the one item that exceeds the other four in magnitude. Had Mordecai only known the importance that he assumed in the estimation of Haman, he might well have plumed himself on his greatness, and said that "After all I am greater than Haman;" which in fact he really was; for any good man, however poor, is greater than any wicked man, however exalted in this world. If Haman had known how to balance correctly he might have proceeded more sweetly in spite of his wickedness. Men and women do not yet know how to subtract, even if they know how to reckon up, their blessings correctly. Too often blessings are overlooked, or not rightly enumerated. Where this fault is escaped, the mistake may be committed of saying, My disadvantages quite overbalance my advantages; the one crook in the lot destroys the pleasure of the appointment. One ghost of the imagination fills the soul with terror, and hides from view all delightful realities. Riches, children, position, honours are destroyed by one frowning Mordecai. Haman speaks of one man who destroys all the good in life; the Christian may speak of one man who develops all the good in life, and brings the highest good into life. The God-man brings the highest good. We may speak of riches, children, position, honours, and say, All this availeth nothing if Jesus is not my assured friend. We may speak of riches, children, position, honours, and say, All these avail something, a vast something, as they are viewed in the light of the Saviour's love. (*e*) *He is defective in multiplication.* From Haman's stand-point too much is made of the insignificant fact that Mordecai refused to render homage. Haman made more of the circumstance than it deserved. The imagination of the discontented man is always an unreliable multiplier. Sometimes it is creative. It makes evils where there are none. Always it makes more of the evils than it ought to do. When we have passed through the ordinary troubles of life, and come to the other side, we often wonder that we have thought so much about them. The advice of that wise moralist, Dr Johnson, to a friend under the discomfort of some sore annoyance was—to bethink himself what a trifle it would appear that day twelvemonths. If we could thus get the power of looking at present troubles as we look at past troubles we should be able to bear them with greater patience, and find them perhaps smaller than we had supposed. Mordecai as well as Haman has his troubles. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. Let us look forward to that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour, and then backward, as it were, upon the sorrows and trials of life; and then we shall consider them as light in comparison with the joy which is before. Peacefully should the Christian stand amid the storms of time. "As meets the rock a thousand waves," so should the Christian meet the shocks of the present life. As the oak gathers strength from the storm, so the Christian should gather strength from his troubles. They should develop to nobler conditions. As the light shines on, and sends its cheering rays through the billows that cast their spray over the lighthouse top, so the Christian should let the light which is within shine on, and send its cheering rays through the billows that shake his whole nature. The hope of the gospel is the true sustaining power. Men and women have tried this hope when disappointment has withered the heart, when sickness has saddened the household, when trouble in many shapes has visited, when death with muffled tread has approached, and have found that it could strengthen amid the failings of flesh, and comfort amid the misgivings of the mind, and sustain amid the sore bleedings of a wounded heart.

III. The discontented man unknowingly makes a good computation. "Yet all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." It is asserted that this is an exaggeration on the part of Haman. Where is the exaggeration? Was not poor Haman at this moment as miserable as he well could be? His good things availed him nothing except to intensify that

discomfort which he felt at not receiving Mordecai's homage. However that may be, Haman's riches, children, position, and supposed honours availed nothing for his salvation against Mordecai sitting at the king's gate, who was in Divine providence to become Haman's destroyer. Haman is here an unconscious prophet. He foretells his own doom. Truly, Haman, all the glory of thy riches, all the strength of thy children, all the pomp of thy position, all the tinsel of thy honours, will avail thee nothing before the wondrous strength of the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Should we not here learn the lesson we are all so slow to learn,—that all worldly good avails nothing if God be not our friend, if God do not have the highest place in our esteem? Riches, children, position, and honours are desirable possessions if rightly employed. But they cannot satisfy the immortal nature. Mournful cries reach our ears from the disappointed hearts of those who have sought the supreme good in material possessions. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit," is the despairing statement of those who have taken their fill of this world's good things, and have forgotten God their Maker,—a statement repeated from age to age,—a statement which never seems to hush its sad refrain. Whatever these blessings may do in other circumstances of life, they "avail nothing" in the contest with death. Here the man struggles alone. Death cannot be bribed. Earthly friends cannot soften the grim conqueror. Honours laid at his feet are useless. Death's conqueror alone is death's helper. The soul triumphs by reason of the possession of immortal riches. Death cannot deprive of the honour that cometh from God.

Another lesson learn, perhaps a little more remote, but none the less salutary. As all Haman's possessions and privileges availed him nothing for salvation so long as Mordecai was not his friend; so all our possessions, whether of fancied or real good; all our supposed moral possessions; all the privileges we enjoy, will avail us nothing for salvation so long as Jesus Christ is not our friend. We do not know what was the appearance of Mordecai as Haman passed by. He may have looked sour. Perhaps there was nothing on his part to invite Haman to terms of reconciliation. But Jesus Christ attracts by the sweetness of his aspect. His voice is very tender and very loving. In the days of his flesh he was the friend of publicans and of sinners; and he is still the same. He is not only waiting for, but inviting, sinners to become reconciled. With Jesus against us all will avail nothing for our safety and happiness. With Jesus on our side, and in our hearts, all will avail nothing that may be arrayed against us for destruction.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 11—13.

Add unto this a great childish kind of peevishness; when they have not what they would have, like children, they throw all away; which, though it be very offensive to God's spirit, yet it seizeth upon men otherwise gracious. Abraham himself, wanting children, undervalued all other blessings; Jonah, because he was crossed of his gourd, was weary of his life; the like may be said of Elias fleeing from Jezebel. This peevishness is increased by a too much flattering of their grief, so far as to justify it; like Jonas, "I do well to be angry even unto death;" he would stand to it. Some, like Rachel, are so peremptory that they "will not be comforted," as if they were in love with their grievances. Wilful men are most vexed in their crosses. It is not for those to be wilful that have not a great measure of wisdom to guide their wills; for God delights to have his will of those that are wedded to their own wills, as in Pharaoh. No men more subject to discontentments than those who would have all things after their own way.—*Sibbes.*

Let us, therefore, when any lawless passions begin to stir, deal with our souls as God did with Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" to fret thus. This will be a means to make us quiet; for, alas! what weak reasons have we often for strong motions: such a man gave me no respect; such another looked more kindly upon another man than upon

me, &c. You have some of Haman's spirit, that for a little neglect would ruin a whole nation. Passion presents men that are innocent as guilty to us—facit ira nocentes; and because we will not seem to be mad without reason, pride commands the wit to justify anger, and so one passion maintains and feeds another.—*Sibbes.*

Look what comforts men have at present in their possession and at command! what excellencies or endowments! men love to be alone to study and think of them; and when they are sequestered from the present use of them, yet they will then be again and again recounting and casting of them up, taking a survey of their happiness in them, applauding their own hearts in their conditions; and as rich men that love money, love to be looking on it, and telling it over; so do men to be summing up their comforts and privileges they enjoy, which others want; as how rich they are, how great, how they excel others in parts and gifts, &c. Oh, how much of that precious sand of our thoughts runs out this way! Thus he in the Gospel; he keeps up an audit in his heart; "Soul," saith he, "thou hast goods laid up for many years." So Haman takes an inventory of his honours and goods; he talks of "all the glory of his riches, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him." So Nebuchadnezzar, as it may seem; he was alone walking and talking to himself like a fool, saying to himself, "Is not this the great Babel which I have built by the might of my power, for the glory of my majesty?

Then greediness appears, that if one lust be not satisfied, nothing else can please us as long as the fit lasts. Rachel, when she could not have her longing, she would in fact die in all haste,—"Give me children, or else I die,"—though she had an husband was worth ten children to her. And so was it with Haman; all the honour and riches which he possessed would not content him, so long as he was not revenged on a poor porter that would not rise to him. So Ahab, though a king, had his stomach took away to all other delights, because that he wanted one bit, Naboth's vineyard, which he coveted.—*Goodwin.*

A little sickness, or old age, or a cross, make our lusts to vanish, though the objects remained, health being the salt to all blessings. In old age men come to say, "I have no pleasure in them;" yea, a little affliction deadeneth a man's lusts, as the toothache vexeth more than the health of all the members doth delight. The affliction of an hour makes a man forget all pleasure, takes a man's heart from all, that all avails him nothing, as it did Haman. Nay, if one wayward lust be crossed (as his was), one ounce of sorrow spoils a sea of pleasure; for, segnius bonam quam mala sentimus, we have a slower and duller sense of good than evil.—*Goodwin.*

Take some quiet, sober moments of life, and add together the two ideas of pride and man; behold him, creature of a span high, stalking through infinite space in all the grandeur of littleness. Perched on a speck of the universe, every wind of heaven strikes into his blood the coldness of death; his soul floats from his body like melody from the string; day and night, as dust on the wheel, he is rolled along the heavens, through a labyrinth of worlds, and all the creations of God are flaring above and beneath. Is this a creature to make for himself a crown of glory, to deny his own flesh, to mock at his fellow, sprung from the dust to which both will soon return? Does the proud man not err? Does he not suffer? Does he not die? When he reasons, is he never stopped by difficulties? When he acts, is he never tempted by pleasure? When he lives, is he free from pain? When he dies, can he escape the common grave? Pride is not the heritage of man; humility should dwell with frailty, and atone for ignorance, error, and imperfections.—*Sidney Smith.*

Remark in Haman the stupendous and wonderful judgment of God; for the impious Haman is most exultant and fearless as regards the preservation and augmentation of his dignity and power; and he is most certain also of the destruction of Mordecai, whom he prosecutes

with hatred. But behold now the end of the thing. The impious and secure Haman should perish with sudden destruction; while the pious and afflicted Mordecai is unexpectedly raised to the highest dignity. Let us therefore cast away all impious security, and fear God; so that, walking according to the calling of God, you may be preserved though the sky fall, and the earth be removed.—*Breuz.*

Those that are disposed to be uneasy will never want something or other to be uneasy at; and proud men, though they have much to their mind, yet, if they have not all to their mind, it is as nothing to them. The thousandth part of what Haman had would serve to make a humble modest man as much of a happiness as he expects from this world; and yet Haman complained as passionately as if he had been sunk into the lowest degree of poverty and disgrace.—*Matthew Henry.*

"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

Haman's misery sprung from his most prominent vice. The avenger did not so much track his path, like an independent retributive messenger, as that it was secreted in his very sin. It is often so in providence. God does not need to stretch forth his hand against the sinner. It is enough that he allows the working of his sin to overtake him. Had there been no pride in Haman's heart he could never have been subjected to this soul-torture because of a harmless affront by an inferior in rank; but forasmuch as he had nursed and cherished his pride to an ungovernable extent, the pain and anguish which he had to endure when it was thwarted and injured was crucifying to all his prosperity and joy. He became his own tormentor. The law is universal, giving to all sin its entail of evil. The sinner may suppose that his sin is not known, and, because not known, that it will escape punishment; but the sin will itself find out the man, and the punishment will grow out of it as a poisonous plant from a hidden seed. Sceptics may theoretically deny the Divine government, but practically it is beyond dispute. By an inexorable law "evil pursueth sinners, but to the righteous good shall be repaid."

Intimately connected with this thought, there is another of equal importance—that we are not in a position to judge of the relative amount of happiness or unhappiness in the lot of man upon the earth. Surveyed from without there might not appear to be a more enviable man than Haman. If earthly good could make happiness there was no element awanting in his case. From his own admission he had everything—riches, family, exaltation; and all his surroundings were grand and delightful. There was ostensibly no comparison between his lot and that of some contented poor man, who, besides meanness and obscurity, has to bear the burden of bodily suffering. Nevertheless you might never get from the poor sufferer under the influence of religion the same confession of wasted happiness and blighted peace, that we have from this lordly great man in the high day of his abounding prosperity. Let the outward condition be what it may, his spirit—the *real* man—rises superior to it, and is not touched by it. But in the other case it was the spirit which was diseased, and which, like the scorpion when surrounded by fire, turned its sting in upon itself. So that, before we could estimate relative individual happiness or unhappiness, we would require to go below the surface of things and look upon the heart. The most enviable might then be found to be really the least, and the least the more so. Injured pride, malice, jealousy, and hatred, though all unseen, may yet have rendered the heart inconceivably more miserable, and the man's estate vastly less desirable, than any amount of poverty and merely physical suffering could possibly have produced. Neither his pride, the presence of friends, nor the prospect of again banqueting with the king and queen on the morrow, could restrain Haman from making the humiliating confession that, because of one thing which was rankling in his soul, he was truly an unenviable—miserable man.

Moreover, we cannot fail to notice that outward prosperity in an unsanctified heart, renders the man more susceptible to trifling annoyances. He becomes so accustomed to what is highly pleasing that a very small thing occasions great uneasiness. While he looks at his good things through the large end of the telescope he beholds what is troublesome and vexatious through the small. What a hardier nature would dash off as a hot plate does water, the nature softened to effeminacy by luxury receives as a poisonous drug, and because of it can find no rest. The more that it gets the more does it crave; and until the little thing craved has been obtained—and yet on the back of it there is always another and another—the confession is, and it is the confession of every vain, worldly, wicked life, "All this availeth me nothing."

Whilst we now leave Haman fomenting his rage and preparing for revenge on the morrow, there is one great spiritual truth which his lamentable confession should press home upon our hearts. Let a man have the whole world laid at his feet, there shall yet be a void in the soul, which cannot be reached by all its pleasures and rewards—a void which, until it has been supplied, the whole world will avail him nothing. The world's broad way is crowded with eager seekers after happiness. "It is here," cries one, and there is a rush in that direction, only to be followed by disappointed looks and longing hearts. "It is there," cries another, and there is anxious toiling and plodding for its attainment; but the cisterns are found at last to be broken and empty. In the midst of this thirsting, moiling, weary world, Jesus has caused his voice to be heard, pleading and saying:—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—*McEwan.*

1. In the first place, in the case of men worldly-minded and destitute of the fear of God, there is generally some dominant principle or passion which destroys their comfort, and precludes them from reaping the full benefit of the blessings which God has bestowed upon them. Thus the man whose heart is full of covetousness can never be happy. What he has, although it is far more than sufficient to supply his wants, is yet so far beneath what he desires, that he will not take full use of it, just because it is not so much as he would have. What Mordecai was to Haman, some imagined amount of wealth is to him; and thus his present acquisitions avail nothing, so long as he cannot get all he aims at. Again, the envious man cannot be happy. Oh, with what malignant eye he looks upon his neighbour's good, and marks his advancement, and observes the success of his schemes, and his growing prosperity! He may be thriving in the world himself beyond what he could have anticipated, and may have all the substantial comforts of life in abundance; but he cannot find enjoyment in them, because this other man stands so much higher than he. What Mordecai was to Haman, his neighbour's worldly advantages are to the man in whose heart envy dwells; for it eats out all happiness. Again, the victim of pride and vanity cannot be happy. The self-importance to which these passions give birth cannot escape unruffled in the world. Men are not always measured by their own pretensions; and when any respect or honour is withheld from them to which they think themselves entitled, they are far more deeply troubled than they would be by any temporal loss. They deem themselves insulted and degraded; they cannot look with patience upon objects which formerly pleased them; and they long for an opportunity to make retaliation for the wrong or slight they have received. This is a case analogous to that of Haman; and those who are animated by these feelings must, like him, be necessarily wretched. I might protract these remarks, but enough has been said to illustrate the principle, that whatever amount of worldly good men who fear not God may have, yet, by allowing some evil passion or propensity to obtain the mastery over them, they destroy their own comfort, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

2. But now, in the second place, I would advert for a moment to the danger to which such people expose themselves. That which the covetous spirit feels to be lacking to satisfy its desires, it will often strive to attain by most unwarrantable means. Hence the sins of dishonesty, deceit, falsehood, and, when opportunity serves, violence and rapacity, are superadded to the sin of covetousness, and men, ere they are well aware, are drawn into courses from which at one time they would have shrunk back with horror. So also the cherishing of the spirit of envy leads to the sins of uncharitable judging, malice, detraction, slander, all of which are destructive of a man's personal happiness, as well as of the peace of society. In the same way vanity and pride stand not alone, but bring in their train hatred and revenge, as we see in the text, and as all history testifies. And thus, by the indulgence of forbidden passions and desires, men not only deprive themselves of the comfort which they might derive from the blessings of a kind providence, but, as one sinful propensity leads to another, they lay themselves open on every side to many positive evils, from which, with better regulated hearts, they would have been completely free.

3. But in the third place, there is another and more general application that may be made of the text to matters bearing more directly upon the spiritual interests of men. Haman, describing to his friends his wealth, his grandeur, his various possessions, and his vast influence, had to conclude by saying: "All this availeth me nothing." There was still a something needed to complete his happiness. Now, we say this is a true picture of the feelings of worldly men, who are destitute of the fear of God, even when it cannot be affirmed of them that they are in any marked manner the slaves of evil passions. There is always some dissatisfaction with their present lot which needs to be removed; there is a want—a something which the soul requires to its full and thorough well-being, which all the world's good cannot supply. That want originated in man's apostasy, when he ceased to have God as his friend and his chief good. It makes itself felt ofttimes in the midst of such profusion of earthly enjoyment as would lead one to think that there could be no want there. It will make itself be felt awfully when the soul hovers on the brink of eternity. Now this want the Gospel of Christ supplies. Through the acceptance of him by faith as the Redeemer of the lost, the light of God's countenance shines upon the soul, and God himself comes again to be enjoyed as the soul's chief good and portion. Then providential blessings, and chastisements also, are felt to be good; yea, all things work together for good to them that believe in the Son of God, for they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Yet let me here, before concluding the present lecture, remind you that the feeling of dissatisfaction with earthly good does not of itself indicate a spiritual mind, although sometimes it is unhappily mistaken for it. I have referred to the soul's want as felt and expressed not unfrequently when death approaches. And so it is, that under deep suffering, and after long-protracted illness, the confession will be made that the world cannot satisfy, and that the strength has been spent for that which is not bread. But, my friends, do not wait till that time ere you make the confession and seek the better portion. Why should you live under the pressure of a felt want which can be at this moment supplied? Why should you, under the dominance of some evil principle, deprive yourselves of the right relish for the good gifts of God, by saying: "All this availeth me nothing, while the very thing I long for is not given me." Does not the Saviour declare, with reference to earthly good: "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Trust his word, then, and take himself, and your soul will have substantial and imperishable realities to feast upon. Amen.—*Davidson.*

Ver. 13.—*Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.*

Haman himself confesses the vanity of his high-swelling words. Why does he talk of his riches, of his children, of the favour of the king and queen, of the grandeur of his condition? That his friends might congratulate him as the happiest man in the king's dominions. Yet with the same breath he declares himself unhappy. He confesses, that all that confluence of blessings which swelled him with pride, were not blessings to him, because a certain man whom he despised did not bow the knee to him.

There are few who will confess so plainly as Haman the weakness of their own spirit. Men are ashamed to say that trifles disturb their minds, and deprive them of self-enjoyment. But it is certain, that numbers, like Haman, are miserable amidst the means of happiness, because they want a disposition for enjoying happiness. They are so unreasonable, that a thousand enjoyments lose their relish, for the want of something else which they cannot obtain. "A good man is satisfied from himself;" and he that is not satisfied from himself, will not be satisfied from anything without him. He is like a sick man surrounded with the richest dainties. He cannot relish them. He starves in the midst of plenty.

Give a whole world of pleasure to a man who loves the world, and the things of it, he will soon find that something is wanted, though perhaps he does not know, so well as Haman thought he did, what it is. He finds some gall and wormwood that spread poison over his pleasures. All his abundance cannot compensate for the loss of some one thing or other that he deems essential to his happiness. The fact is, that the world cannot give a right constitution to his disordered soul, or be a substitute for that Divine favour in which lies the life of our souls. Habakkuk, Paul, and other good men, could be happy in the want of every earthly enjoyment; nor could all the miseries which are abhorred by the generality of mankind greatly disturb their tranquillity; for God was the portion of their inheritance, and in him they had what a thousand worlds could not give. But those who know not God, and his Son Jesus Christ, in whom are the light and the life of men, know not the way of peace. Whatever they have, they want the one thing needful, without which all things else are vanity, and vexation of spirit.

"I have all things, and abound," said an apostle, who was often in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and who, at the time when he wrote these words, was a poor prisoner that had newly received a temporary supply from his friends. This man had nothing, and yet possessed all things. Ten thousand talents were but a small part of Haman's wealth, and yet he is miserably poor, for all that he had could avail him nothing. The believer in Christ must be rich in the midst of poverty; for he is possessed of gold tried in the fire. The man who knows not Christ, is poor though he be rich; because he is utterly destitute of the true riches.—*Lawson.*

Suppose a man has a very fair house to dwell in, and he has fair orchards and gardens, and set about with tall brave trees for ornament; what a most unreasonable thing were it for him to be weeping and wringing his hands because the wind blows off a few leaves of his trees, when he has abundance of all kinds of fruit! Thus it is with many; though they have a great many comforts about them, yet some little matter, the blowing off a few leaves even, is enough to disquiet them.—*Burroughs.*

Our base hearts are more discontented at one loss than thankful for a hundred mercies. God hath plucked one bunch of grapes for you; but how many precious clusters are left behind.—*Watson.*

Discontent is a secret boasting of some excellency in ourselves, as if God did not govern well, or we could govern better! Should a silly passenger, that understands not the use of the compass, be angry that the skilful pilot will not steer the vessel according to his pleasure? Must we give out our orders to God, as though the counsels of infinite wisdom must roll about according to the conceits of our fancy.—*Charnock.*

To secure a contented spirit, measure your desires by your fortunes, and not

your fortunes by your desires.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Contentment is a pearl of great price, and whoever procures it at the expense of ten thousand desires makes a wise and happy purchase.—*Balguy.*

Be content; and the best way to be contented is, believe that condition best which God carves out to you by his providence. If God had seen it fit for us to have more, we should have had it; but his wisdom sees this best for us. Perhaps we could not manage a great estate; it is hard to carry a full cup without spilling, and a full estate without sinning. Great estates may be snares; a boat may be overturned by having too great a sail. The believing that estate best God carves for us makes us content. —*Watson.*

"The noblest mind the best contentment has."
Spenser.

"All great souls still make their own content;
We to ourselves may all our wishes grant;
For, nothing coveting, we nothing want."
Dryden.

"My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen; my crown is call'd content;
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy."
Shakespeare.

"Cellars and granaries in vain we fill
With all the bounteous summer's store,
If the mind thirst and hunger still;
The poor rich man's emphatically poor.
Slaves to the things we too much prize
We masters grow of all that we despise."
Cowley.

"Contentment gives a crown,
Where fortune hath denied it."—*Ford.*

The nature of true content, says an old writer, is to fill all the chinks of our desires, as the wax does the seal. Content is the poor man's riches, and desire is the rich man's poverty. Riches and poverty are more in the heart than in the hand; he is wealthy that is contented; he is poor that wants it. O, poor Ahab, that carest not for thine own large possessions, because thou mayest not have another's! O, rich Naboth, that carest not for all the dominions of Ahab, so thou mayest enjoy thine own! Content produces in some measure all those effects which the alchemist usually ascribed to what he calls the philosopher's stone, and if it does not bring riches, it does the same thing by banishing the desire of them.—*Addison.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 14.

THE SPEECH OF A FOOLISH WIFE.

Job said unto his wife, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh;" and if Haman had been as good and as wise as Job he might have said the same unto his wife, Zeresh. But Haman was not like Job; and it may be that his wife and his friends spoke according to that which they knew would harmonize with his depraved and wicked nature. Sometimes the wife is the salvation of her husband, but too often by the natural delicacy of her nature she follows his leadings. We know little about Zeresh, but her speech in this verse at least does not tend to give us an exalted view of her character. Here we find that the wicked Haman is joined to, and backed up by, a wicked wife. We now refer to the wife, and leave the friends alone, for she is evidently the mouth-piece of the company. She leads the counsel; she lays down the diabolical plan by which Haman may seek to satisfy his revenge. A good wife, who shall tell her value? A bad wife, who shall declare her power of mischief? Haman was now far gone in wickedness; but a good wife might still have done much for his restraint.

I. The speech of this foolish wife is vindictive. Here are none of those sweet words which we naturally expect from a gentle woman. There is not the slightest trace of that tenderness which should be the characteristic and the glory of the female nature. There is rather the hard cruelty of Lady Macbeth inciting her shrinking husband to the performance of the murderous deed. "Let a gallows be

made of fifty cubits high." Let the lofty gallows speak of the all-mastering force of the revenge. Let the ignominious nature of the punishment set forth thy determination to glut thy wicked feelings. Revenge is loathsome in any. Never does revenge seem more loathsome than in a woman. The wife, the mother, appears to view with a nature so hard that we can scarcely imagine her capable of motherly feeling. Is it possible that the woman who speaks in this verse ever gloated with motherly love and fondness over the infant beauty of her first-born? But what strange mixtures we are. Zeresh might have run to her child in distress, and have gently nurtured the sick ones; and yet can say, "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high." Strange inconsistency! Our human love is too often of a mere selfish character. Divine love is not self-considering. It flows out to the evil and the good. Human love must be formed after the pattern of Divine love if it is to work beneficially, and to be ennobling.

II. The speech of this foolish wife is flattering. "To-morrow speak thou unto the king." Thou art all-powerful at Court; use thy power for the removal of thy hated enemy sitting at the king's gate, and causing thee constant annoyance. The pleasant words of a dear wife are encouraging. The busy world does not sufficiently consider how much it owes to the stimulating words of good wives living in retirement, living for those whom they fondly love, living to strengthen their husbands for the stern battle. The faith of a fond wife in her husband's power has but the husband's salvation. Happy is it for the nervous and sensitive husband that the wife considers him a hero, and loves to extol his virtues. A true wife has large conceptions of her husband's abilities. Zeresh may still have believed in her wicked husband. But her flattery is ruinous. Let discretion rule in our loving words. Let us beware lest we be led astray to our own destruction by flattering words.

III. The speech of this foolish wife is cruel. Bitterly cruel as coming from a woman. Cruel if we consider the doom proposed for poor Mordecai; and cruel if we consider the repellent selfishness to be encouraged by the exhortation. "Then go thou in merrily with the king to the banquet." What is Mordecai's crime that he should be impaled on the lofty tree? What has so hardened the delicate nature of a woman that she can speak callously of that most awful form of human punishment? How very hard a woman can be when she sets herself to be hard. The hellish cruelty of a cruel woman is the most awful fact on God's sin-blighted earth. Happy the man so far who has never had to experience the effects of such cruelty! Oh, Zeresh, this is not the high road to merriment! The gallows on which the Mordecais hang are not the means by which it is to be secured. Well, yes, perhaps merriment, but not lasting happiness. The laughter of fools, but not the deep joy of the righteous. Merriment and hanging! The banquet and the gallows! Extremes meet in this world of contradictions. Joy and sorrow tread upon each other's heels. Tears and smiles are close together in this strangely disordered universe. The gallows is raised by selfishness. Merriment is the outcome of selfishness. Celestial joy is the outcome of benevolence.

IV. The speech of this foolish wife was pleasing. "The thing pleased Haman." It was intended to please, and the object was accomplished. Depraved nature is pleased by that which ministers to its depravity. Had Zeresh set herself to reform Haman, the work would have been more difficult, less pleasing, but perhaps more satisfactory in the long run. The work of the reformer is always difficult, and not always satisfactory in this world. Some tell us that speaking the truth always pays. That men at first may not like the truth, but that afterwards they come to respect the speaker, and even give a testimonial. The only testimonial that Stephen received was stones, not curiously carved, not having inscribed upon them his virtues, and not presented by a kid-gloved deputation. Stephen was not likely to receive much benefit in this world from the report of his testimonial as sent to the Christian newspapers of his time. Zeresh had evidently no high-souled

views; she spoke of the present, like too many. She pleased Haman, and thought of no dreadful future.

V. The speech of this foolish wife was ruinously successful. Haman caused the gallows to be made in accordance with the suggestion of Zeresh and the friends. There is a success which is ruinous, and this was one of the kind. Ruinous not to Mordecai, but to Haman and to Zeresh. Our own words are sometimes our own bitter and relentless destroyers. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." In lonely hours of bitter grief did the words of Zeresh haunt her memory, and fill her soul with anguish. As she saw her poor Haman impaled on the lofty gallows, how she would have liked to have recalled the foolish words. But they cannot be recalled. Foolish words once spoken are spoken beyond control. Be slow to speak. Be swift to hear. In consigning other people to sorrow we must inflict sorrow on ourselves. Those who erect the gallows for others should walk very carefully themselves.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 14.

An envious man cannot peacefully enjoy the benefits which God gives him. "Go not after thy lusts, but refrain thyself from thine appetites." It is very grievous of wives to urge their husbands to do wickedly. He who digs a pit for others will fall in himself. We must not of ourselves revenge ourselves on our enemy, but first bring him before the proper tribunal. When the wicked are busy to remove from their path what will mar their earthly joy, then, on the other hand, the godly should be diligent to remove that which will embitter their spiritual and heavenly joy.—*Starke.*

Observe how false and vain is the confidence of impious and cruel men, who seek and hope to oppress, and utterly destroy, the servants of God. It is themselves that perish by the just judgment of God, and they are often caught by the very snares they lay for others; while God rescues his servants, and magnificently vindicates them. Goliath and Holofernes are slain with their own swords, and the saints triumph with their heads. The Babylonian satraps seemed to themselves secure, when the flames and the lions were about to devour Daniel and his companions; but the latter were gloriously preserved, and the former ignominously perished by their own artifices and instruments. Pharaoh boasted, "I will overtake (the Hebrews); I will divide the spoil;" but he immediately became food for the fishes, and a prey for the servants of the Lord. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are foolishness." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them." These are the effects of the judgment of which the Holy Spirit speaks by the prophets: "Evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Let us therefore cast away impious security, contempt of God, and inhumanity towards others; but let us walk in the love and fear of the Lord, that at length we may come to His heavenly kingdom.—*Feuardent.*

The wit of women hath wont to be noted for more sudden, and more sharp. Zeresh, the wife of Haman, sets on foot the motion of speedy revenge, which is applauded by the rest. I do not hear them say: Be patient awhile; thou hast already set Mordecai his last day; the month Adar will not be long in coming; the determination of his death hath made him desperate; let him in the mean time eat his own heart in envy at thy greatness. But they rather advise of a quick despatch. Malice is a thing full of impatience, and hates delay of execution next unto mercy. While any grudge lies at the heart, it cannot be freely cheerful. Forced smiles are but the hypocrisy of mirth. How happy were it for us, if we would be zealously careful to remove the hindrances of our true spiritual joy, those stubborn corruptions that will not stoop to the power of grace.—*Bishop Hall.*

"Thou canst never prevail against Mordecai by means which have already been brought to bear against his people."

said Zeresh to Haman. "Thou canst not kill him with a knife or sword, for Isaac was delivered from the same; neither canst thou drown him, for Moses and the people of Israel walked safely through the sea. Fire will not burn him, for with Chananyah and his comrades it failed; wild beasts will not tear him, for Daniel was rescued from the lion's fangs; neither will a dungeon contain him, for Joseph walked to honour through a prison's gates. Even if we deprive him of sight, we cannot prevail against him, for Samson was made blind, and yet destroyed thousands of the Philistines. There is but one way left us; we must hang him." It was in accordance with this advice that Haman built the gallows fifty cubits high. After he had erected this dread instrument of death, he sought the presence of Mordecai, to gloat over his coming triumph. He found the Jew in the College, with his pupils gathered around him. Their loins were girded in sackcloth, and they wept at the words which their teacher was addressing to them. "To-morrow," said Haman, "I will first destroy these children, and I will then hang Mordecai on the gallows I have prepared." He remained in the school and saw the mothers of the pupils bring them their meals; but they all refused to eat, saying: "By the life of our teacher, Mordecai, we will neither eat nor drink; fasting will we die."

But Haman was to receive his punishment. There is a saying of the Rabbis: "If a stone falls upon a pitcher, the pitcher breaks; if the pitcher falls upon the stone, the pitcher also breaks." Be it as it may, it is bad for the pitcher, and bad similarly for the enemies of Israel; for even when Israel strays from righteousness, the instruments of their chastisement are also punished, as in the instances of Nebuchadnezzar, Titus, Haman, &c.—*Talmud.*

Haman was pleased with the advice of his friends, and began to put it in execution. But he found too soon, that "he who flattereth a man spreadeth a net for his feet." Haman prepared for Mordecai in intention, but for himself in reality, a gallows of fifty cubits high. Remember and believe the instruction of the wise man, "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him."—*Lawson.*

As Mordecai's offence had been presumptuous above measure in the view of Haman and his friends, so the punishment of it was to be conspicuous. The gallows on which he was to be hanged was to be upwards of forty feet (seventy-five feet) in height, so that the victim might be exposed to the view of the whole city—so that all might learn that it was no slight matter to provoke the vengeance of the favourite of the king. And mark how the thirst for vengeance converts men into fiends. Far more gratifying than any of the luxuries which he could taste at the table of the queen would be the sight to Haman of Mordecai hanging on the gibbet. "Have everything ready to feed your revenge," his friends said to him, "and then go in merrily with the king unto the banquet." Generally a deed of cruelty and bloodshed for a time destroys, even in wicked men, their relish for their usual pleasure. But there are monsters in human form, as the recent massacres in India show us; indeed as all history shows us; and as we see here in the case of Haman. There are human fiends who, when their passions are inflamed, riot in cruelty, and feel as if the exercise of it gave a zest to all their other enjoyments. Some philosophers talk of the innate dignity and excellence of human nature, but it may be safely said that there is no enormity which men will not perpetrate when they are left to themselves, and destitute of the softening and elevating influence of true religion.

But passing from this topic, we may suppose now, when Haman was comforted by the suggestion of his friends, that the two things which chiefly occupied his mind and pleased him, were the preparation of the gallows for Mordecai, and the thought of the interview with the king on the morrow, when he felt sure he would obtain the request he was to make. "Behold the wicked," says the Psalmist, "he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief: he

made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made: his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon himself." That night was spent in Haman's house — by his slaves in making all ready for the murderous deed of the morrow, and by himself, in joyous anticipation of having his victim fully within his power.

"*Macbeth.* If we should fail,——
Lady M. We fail.
But screw your courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep,
(Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him,) his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassel so convince,
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only: When in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
His spongy officers; who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?"

Shakespeare.

A good wife, says an old writer, is heaven's last, best gift to man: his angel of mercy; minister of graces innumerable; his gem of many virtues; his casket of jewels. Her voice, his sweetest music; her smiles, his brightest day; her kiss, the guardian of innocence; her arms, the pall of his safety, the balm of his health, the balsam of his life; her industry, his sweetest wealth; her economy, his safest steward; her lips, his faithful counsellors; her bosom, the softest pillow of his cares; and her prayers, the ablest advocates of heaven's blessing on his head. A married man falling into misfortune is more apt to retrieve his situation in the world than a single one, chiefly because his spirits are soothed and retrieved by domestic endearments, and his self-respect kept alive by finding that although all abroad be darkness and humiliation, yet there is a little world of love at home over which he is monarch.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1, 2. *Workmen in the tunnel.* Not many years since a number of workmen were engaged in constructing a railway tunnel. In the midst of their work there was a sudden fall of earth, which completely closed the entrance, and shut them up from the outer world. Their comrades outside, as soon as they discovered what had happened, began digging through the mass of earth. It was many hours before the task was accomplished. They found them quietly pursuing their labour inside the tunnel. Their work had never been interrupted. They had eaten their dinner, and gone on digging and boring. They knew, they said, that their fellow-workmen would rescue them; and so they went on with their labour. Transfer their state of mind to the Christian in his perplexities, and we see exactly what practical faith is. Faith teaches the believer, in the midst of the severest difficulty, not to set about forcing a way out of his trouble, but just to ply his pickaxe and spade in the work which is straight before him, leaving it to the Father above to make a way of escape for him. In the right manner, and at the right moment, the help comes, and the Christian goes on his way more rejoicing.—*Hooper.*

Vers. 1, 2. *The spider's web.* See the spider casting out her film to the gale; she feels persuaded that somewhere or other it will adhere, and form the commencement of her web. She commits the slender filament to the breeze, believing that there is a place provided for it to fix itself. In this fashion should we believingly cast forth our endeavours in this life, confident that God will find a place for us. He who bids us pray and work will aid our efforts, and guide us in his Providence in a right way. Sit not still in despair, O son of toil, but again cast out the floating thread of hopeful endeavour, and the mind of love will bear it to its resting-place! —*Spurgeon.*

Vers. 1, 2. *Christopher Columbus.* Christopher Columbus, if we have a right understanding of his character, was a man of a self-controlled and quiet spirit. The foundation of this subdued and immovable calmness of spirit, which supported him under immense labours, deprivations, and sufferings, was faith, undoubtedly. And it is very possible that it was, to a considerable degree at least, *natural* faith. That is to say, he had faith in his mathematical and geographical deductions; he had faith in his personal skill as a navigator; he had faith in his own personal influence over minds of less power; he had faith in his integrity of purpose. He felt, therefore, that he stood on a strong foundation; and this inward conviction, strengthened perhaps in some degree by religious sentiments, imparted, both inwardly and outwardly, that self-possessed and delightful calmness of spirit and manner which is one of the surest indices of true greatness.—*Upham.*

Dr. Livingstone's tonic.—This certainly served the great traveller well in the long contest with obstacles of every kind. His work was consecrated to God, and the consciousness that he was faithfully serving him gave strength in the midst of weakness, and saved him from despair. One

month before his death he wrote: "Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair. I encourage myself in the Lord my God, and go forward." It was this spirit that sustained him from the first. He might be prostrated again and again by bodily illness, but nothing could make him an invalid Christian, even for a day.

Singing in prison.—On one occasion some of the converts were apprehended, and unjustly put in prison. One of the party was the native preacher. They were kept in prison several days. The Sabbath came round, and though shut up, like Paul and Silas, they determined to worship God in the jail. They sang aloud the praises of God. Their keepers came to forbid and scold them; the native preacher then began to preach to them. At length the chief officer of the *Zemindhar* was obliged to set them at liberty, saying, "What can we do with these people? If we imprison them they sing; if we scold them, they preach and argue."

When *Madame Guyon* was imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes, in 1695, she not only sang, but wrote songs of praise unto her God.

Vers. 1, 2. *Martyrs' heroism.* When the executioner went behind Jerome of Prague to set fire to the pile, "Come here," said the martyr, "and kindle it before my eyes; for if I dreaded such a sight, I should never have come to this place when I had a free opportunity to escape." The fire was kindled, and he then sang a hymn, which was soon finished by the encircling flames. Algerius, an Italian martyr, thus wrote from his prison, a little before his death: "Who would believe that in this dungeon I should find a paradise so pleasant?—in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity, and hope, and life; where others weep, I rejoice." Wishart, when in the fire which removed him from the world, exclaimed: "The flame doth torment my body, but no whit abates my spirits."—*New Cyclopædia of Anecdote.*

Vers. 1, 2. *Faith the soul's venture.* Faith is nothing else but the soul's venture. It ventures to Christ, in opposition to all legal terrors; it ventures on Christ, in opposition to our guiltiness; it ventures for Christ, in opposition to all difficulties and discouragements.—*W. Bridge.*

Ver. 2. *A bold petitioner.* The Romans had a law that no person should approach the emperor's tent in the night, upon pain of death; but it once happened that a soldier was found in that situation, with a petition in his hand, waiting for an opportunity of presenting it. He was apprehended, and going to be immediately executed; but the emperor, having overheard the matter in his pavilion, cried aloud, saying, "If the petition be for himself, let him die; if for another, spare his life." Upon inquiry, it was found that the generous soldier prayed for the lives of his two comrades who had been taken asleep on the watch. The emperor nobly forgave them all.—*Biblical Museum.*

Vers. 3, 5. *Alexander the Great.* Alexander the Great had a famous but indigent philosopher in his Court, who, on one occasion, being particularly straitened in his circumstances, applied to his patron for aid. Alexander at once gave him a commission to receive of his treasurer whatever he wanted. He immediately demanded, in his sovereign's name, ten thousand pounds. The treasurer, before complying, waited upon the king, and told him how exorbitant he thought the sum. Alexander heard him with patience, and then replied: "Let the money be instantly paid; I am delighted with this philosopher's way of thinking; by the largeness of his request, he shows the high idea he has conceived both of my superior wealth and my royal munificence.

Vers. 3, 5. *Theodosius and Sigismund.* Theodosius, Archbishop of Cologne, when the Emperor Sigismund demanded of him the directest and most compendious way how to obtain true happiness, made answer in brief thus: "Perform when thou art well what thou promisedst when thou wast sick." David did so; he made vows in war, and paid them in peace. And thus should all good men do, not like the cunning devil, of whom the epigrammist thus writeth:

"Ægrotat dæmon, monachus tunc esse volebat;
Convaluit dæmon, monachus tunc esse nolebat."

Well Englished—

"The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;
The devil got well, the devil a monk was he."

Nor like unto many now-a-days, that if God's hand do but lie somewhat heavy upon them, oh! what promises, what engagements are there for amendment of life! How like unto marble against rain do they seem to sweat and melt, but still retain their hardness; let but the rod be taken off their backs, or health restored, then as their bodies live their vows die, all is forgotten; nay, many times it so falleth out, that they are far worse than ever they were before.—*Spencer.*

Ingratitude to God.—The English proverb says, "The river past and God forgotten," to express with how mournful a frequency, he whose assistance was invoked—it may have been earnestly in the moment of peril—is remembered no more so soon as by his help the danger has been surmounted. And the Italian form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: "The peril passed, the saint mocked," the vows made to him in peril remaining unperformed in safety, and he treated somewhat as in Greek story Juno was treated by Mandrabulus the Samian, who having, under her auspices and through her direction, discovered a gold mine, in his instant gratitude vowed to her a golden ram, which he presently exchanged in intention for a silver one, and again this for a very small brass one, and this for nothing at all.—*Trench.*

Ver. 3. *God's promises conditional.* A proclamation is read, wherein a Christian king grants honour and wealth to certain of his subjects, with assurance of donation on their just demand. One amongst the multitude leaps at the news, springs away, and stays not to hear it out; there is a condition following, provided first, that they put on arms, and expel the Turk which infests some part of his dominions. This man comes one of the foremost to demand the promised honours; he is asked for a testimony of his valour and service in the wars. Alas, he never tarried to hear that condition, and therefore lost the reti-

bution. Thus it is that God promiseth eternal life to men; withal chargeth them to believe in Christ, and to do their faithful service against the world, the flesh, and the devil; but so it is, that many are quite lost, for not staying to hear the proclamation of the Gospel out, they run away with opinion of sufficient belief, and never think of obedience; whereas the promises of God are conditional. As there is a reward promised, so there is a condition promised; it must be our obedience first, and then comes in God's recompence; our devotion goes before, and his retribution follows after.—*Spencer.*

Vers. 6, 8. *Gossner.* Standing by his grave, one said of him, that it was not hyperbole, "He prayed up the walls of an hospital, and the hearts of the nurses; he prayed mission-stations into being, and missionaries into faith; he prayed open the hearts of the rich, and gold from the most distant lands." And as for his sermons, the power of the Word did not lie so much in the thoughts, or in the art of the preacher, as in prayer. Prayer was his atmosphere; he could not live without it. So soon as he came to Berlin, he gathered a few round him for prayer. They continued in prayer while he lived. He could not be present where it was excluded. The Bible Society had determined to open its committee meetings only with silent prayer; he protested, and the protest showed how deeply his heart was sunk in the heart of Christ. "A Bible society that does not begin with prayer is to my mind a synagoga profanorum. I do not despise a short silent prayer; but it is too little at a Bible Society, and no more than if a nurse said to a child, 'Make a curtsey,' and it made it, and that was all. If I went to the meeting and sought prayer, and it was forbidden, I would take my hat and stick and run out as if a mad dog had bitten me. If I could raise the dead, I would go to Wittenberg and call Luther out of his grave, and Spener, and Arndt, and Andreä, and bring them to the Bible Society at Berlin, and let them decide."—*Stevenson's Praying and Working.*

Vers. 6, 8. *Effective prayer.*—God looks not at the pomp of words and variety of expressions, but at the sincerity and devotion of the heart. The key opens the door, not because it is gilt, but because it fits the lock.

Constant in prayer.—Felix Neff once made the following comparison: "When a pump is frequently used, but little pains are necessary to have water; the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high. But if the pump has not been used for a long while, the water gets low, and when you want it you must pump a long while, and the water comes only after great efforts. It is so with prayer; if we are instant in prayer, every little circumstance awakens the disposition to pray, and desires and words are always ready. But if we neglect prayer it is difficult for us to pray; for the water in the well gets low."

Vers. 6, 8. *Answer to earnest prayer.*—"At the time the Diet of Nuremburg was held," says Tholuck, "Luther was earnestly praying in his own dwelling; and at the very hour when the edict granting free toleration to all Protestants was issued, he ran out of his house, crying out, 'We have gained the victory! Do you understand that?'"

Vers. 6, 8. *Access to God.* However early in the morning you seek the gate of access, you find it already open; and however deep the midnight moment when you find yourself in the sudden arms of death, the winged prayer can bring an instant Saviour, and this wherever you are. It needs not that you should enter some awful shrine, or pull off your shoes on some holy ground. Could a memento be reared on every spot from which an acceptable prayer has passed away, and on which a prompt answer has come down, we should find Jehovah-shammah, "the Lord has been here," inscribed on many a cottage hearth and many a dungeon floor.—*Dr. James Hamilton.*

Vers. 6, 8. *Christ presenting our prayers.*—"A child," says Ambrose, "that is willing to present his father with a bouquet, goes into the garden, and there gathers some flowers and some weeds together; but, coming to his mother, she picks out the weeds and binds the flowers, and so it is presented to the father." Thus, when we have put up our prayers, Christ comes and picks away the weeds, the sin of our prayers, and presents nothing but flowers to his Father, which are a sweet-smelling savour.—*T. Watson.*

Ver. 6, 7. *The late Dr. William Patton.* The story is told that Dr. Patton once met a pious friend with a troubled face, who said; "Doctor, you are just the man I have been wanting to see; I wish to ask you a question." "Well," said the Doctor, "what is it that is troubling you to-day?" "Be quiet," said his friend, "and I will tell you! Now we read that God is just, merciful, and kind," said the friend "That is what we preach," said Dr. Patton. "The Bible further says: 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'" "Correctly quoted," said the Doctor. "Again," added his friend, "the good Book says, 'not one jot or tittle of my Word shall fail.'" "Very true," said the Doctor. "Now," said the anxious friend, "if all that I have quoted is correct, and the Bible be true, I want to ask you how it is, Doctor, that I have been praying to God for the last thirty years that he will do certain things for me, and, so far as I know, not a single thing that I have asked for has been granted? Pray tell me why I have not received answers to my prayers?" The Doctor replied: "My friend, did it ever occur to you that you were presenting bills to God and asking payment for the same before they were due?"—*Christian Age.*

Ver. 6. *Protection through prayer.* In a village in Germany, a poor widow was lying sick in bed, when suddenly a party of soldiers came into the room. They said they had been sent to stay at her house, and in a violent way they demanded bread, and meat, and beer. The poor woman said she had not bread enough in the house for herself and her little ones to eat, and that for her to feed them was impossible. This made the men angry. They began to break and smash things to pieces. They swore at her terribly, and even

threatened to beat her, unless she gave them what they wanted at once. Just then, a little boy, about four years old, who had ran into a corner to hide himself, in terror, when the soldiers first entered the house, came out from his hiding-place. He kneeled down by his mother's bed, and offered this simple prayer: "O dear, kind Jesus, please don't let them hurt mother! make them good to her, and bless them. Amen." One of the soldiers, who had a little boy at home, of about the same age, was very much moved by the dear child's prayer. It brought the tears to his eyes, and in a low voice he said: "Comrades, let's go somewhere else. In a house where a pious child like this lives, God himself must dwell. This is no place for us. Let's go." They did go; but before going, the soldier put two pieces of money in the hand of the child.—*Rev. R. Newton.*

Ver. 6. *Family prayers.* Family prayers will be a secular advantage. A father went into the war to serve his country. His children stayed and cultured the farm. His wife prayed. One of the sons said afterward, "Father is fighting, and we are digging, and mother is praying." "Ah!" said some one, "praying, and digging, and fighting, will bring us out of our national troubles." We may say in the morning, "Give me this day my daily bread," and sit down in idleness and starve to death; but prayer and hard work will give a livelihood to any family. Family religion pays for both worlds. Let us have an altar in each one of our households. You may not be able to formulate a prayer. Then there are Philip Henry's prayers, and there are McDuff's prayers, and there are Philip Doddridge's prayers, and there are the Episcopal Church prayers, and there are scores of books with supplications just suited to the domestic circle. I have been told that in the White House at Washington every day the President's family kneel, and recite the Lord's prayer. Family prayers in the White House have kept the Administration cool and calm, while much of the time Congress has been playing the fool. —*Talmage.*

Ver. 13. *Selfishness.* Haman as a type. We are all too slow to learn the lesson, "Thou art the man;" so that, whilst one's thoughts centre upon Haman, the victim of selfishness, we can with difficulty realize the antitype in ourselves. Nevertheless, the scene in Shushan the palace is a scene in every-day life. The world is a palace of vanity, and abounds with Hamans. "I would have this or that," is the utterance of the soul coveting some longed-for possession. It has it, and it is not satisfied. How can it? An immortal be satisfied with the painted, tinselled finery of fading time! It asks for some near object. "Oh that I had but that!" It obtains it, and its appetite is but whetted for more. Another prize, and another disappointment; another tide of homage, fame, adulation, and another ebbing, with only worthless weeds left on the forsaken shore. Another freight of honour to Haman, and another unbending figure in the rear, whose dark shadow lies outspread upon his pathway, so that all he hath availeth him nothing,—"he is not satisfied." If all this then availeth nothing, what will avail? Now "sin," says Bishop Reynolds, "put bitterness into the soul, that it cannot relish the creature, and it put vanity into the creature that it cannot satisfy the soul; therefore the creature, so long as it is empty of God, must needs be full of vanity and vexation." Hence no one can be truly happy and contented, be his possessions ever so large and splendid, till he grasp by faith the "pearl of great price;" then envy dies, and Mordecai vanishes.—*New Cyclopædia of Anecdote.*

Ver. 11. *The ungodly Pope.* A certain Pope had engraved upon the gates of his new-built college: "Utrecht (where he was born) planted me; Lovain (where he was bred) watered me; but Cæsar (who promoted him to the Popedom) gave increase;" and a merry passenger underwrote: "Hic Deus nihil fecit"—here God did nothing. God had done much for him, but for a mischief to him; as he once gave the Israelites quails to choke them, and a king to vex them; as Saul gave Michal to David to be a snare to him; and as our Saviour gave Judas the bag, to discover the rottenness of his heart. Haman telleth what the king had done for him, but not a little what God. God was not in all his thoughts.—*Trapp.*

Ver. 13. *The danger of discontent.* I recall a picture I once saw in a public gallery. It was a scene in the higher Alps. A noble eagle was in flight, and scores of birds were pursuing him. The hawks and other larger birds he could keep at a distance, as whenever they came near he tore them with his claws, or struck them with his beak. Some humming-birds had joined the others in an attack on the eagle; one of them, scarcely visible in the picture, so tiny a thing is it in comparison with the king of birds, was sitting on his head, pecking away, and scattering the feathers as the eagle soared higher. Naturalists tell us that sometimes the humming-bird will so peck the head and injure the brain of the eagle as to cause his death, while seldom or never in a fair fight with larger birds is he injured. The humming-bird is small, and has a small beak and but little strength; but sitting on the vital part, and constantly teasing, he very frequently accomplishes his work of death. The eagle cannot bite or claw him, and he has not the presence of mind to dip his head in the sea, and thus drown his pursuer.

How often is it the case that we allow little things to annoy us, to destroy our peace, and our happiness, and health? Great troubles we manfully meet and conquer; but little things—humming-bird troubles—get near our heart, and we know not how to shake them off.

It is related by a London physician, of a patient whom he was attending, that he was a great beauty. By some accident, one of his hands was the victim of a malformation. The thing troubled the man day and night, and his health began to fail. He could not bear to have fingers so white and graceful disfigured. "My patient," says the doctor, "was also suffering from a disease that I knew, and he knew, would ultimately be fatal. This, however, did not seem to trouble him. It was his maimed left hand that haunted him everywhere, and concerning

which he made perpetual complaint to me. At length he was taken with a fever, traceable, in a measure, to his unhappy frame of mind, and in a few days died.—*Preacher's Lantern.*

Ver. 13. *Literary Jeremiads.* Goethe, the greatest of German poets, whose long life was one success, said, "They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but labour and sorrow; and I may truly say, that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted anew." A mournful echo of the old patriarchal words, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been." Who can read the posthumous memoirs of Chateaubriand without being struck with the illusive nature of worldly honours and worldly pleasures. Contemporary applause was not wanting to cheer the craving spirit of this scholar and statesman. The author of the 'Genius of Christianity,' and the ambassador of France at the court of London, could not complain that what men call honourable and enviable was denied to him. The following passage from the great Frenchman's memoirs contains a sad and home truth:—"I know not in history a reputation that would tempt me; and, were it necessary to stoop to pick up from my feet, and for my own advantage, the greatest glory the world could offer, I would not give myself the trouble." Are not these like the words of "the preacher, the son of David, the king of Jerusalem?" The miserable lamentations of Lord Chesterfield, a mere drudge of earthly pleasure, over the wretched inanity of a worldly and sensual life, may be considered one of the best sermons unintentionally preached against the inordinate love of this world, coming, as the sentiment does, from one of its successful votaries. Let his own words, penned in the evening of life, tell what he had found the result of his experience to be: "I am now at the age of sixty years; I have run the silly rounds of pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I have been as wicked and as vain as Solomon; I have not been so wise; but this I know, I am wise enough to test the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Lord Byron gave a similar testimony to Dr. Millingen, who attended him in his last illness. "Do you suppose I wish for life? I have grown heartily sick of it, and shall welcome the hour I depart. Why should I regret it? Can it afford me any pleasure? Have I not enjoyed it to a surfeit? Few men can live faster than I did; I am, literally speaking, a young old man. Pleasure I have known under every form in which it can present itself to mortals. I have travelled, satisfied my curiosity, lost every illusion; I have exhausted all the nectar contained in the cup of life; it is time to throw the dregs away. He had sought his happiness in the things of the world, the result was dissatisfaction of spirit.—*Preacher's Lantern.*

Ver. 13. *Worldly dignity renounced.* Baron von Bulow had been, during the earlier part of this century, chiefly engaged in the sanguinary scenes of war. He had signalized himself on the field, and received every honourable testimony to his skill and courage; a special handsome gold medal also had been given him, the inscription was, of course, in German, with the royal cypher. Late in life he attended the Continental Peace Confederation, at which he said, he had endured many hardships through life; for more than forty years he had gone through various scenes, often misled by worldly pleasure, and frequently by infidelity; but now, without discussing the propriety of a military life, he felt in his heart that the best service was that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had rescued him from darkness and brought him to a knowledge of the gospel. He then, with deep feeling, took from his breast the badge of honour which he had received in foreign military service, saying, as he handed it to the chairman, with much emotion, "This I bought with my blood, but it is all over, sir; I do not give it to you, or to this Society, but I give it up to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*Preacher's Lantern.*

Ver. 13. *Things temporal.* Never, perhaps, in any period of the world's history did literary talent receive a homage so universal as that of Sir Walter Scott. His reputation was co-extensive, not only with the English language, but with the boundaries of civilization. The king conferred on him a baronetcy; and wherever he appeared, at home or abroad, he was the lion of the day. All the good things of life were his. His mansion at Abbotsford realized the highest conceptions of a poet's imagination, and seemed like a "poem in stone." His company was of the most honourable of the land, and his domestic enjoyments all that his heart could desire. Yet he was not happy. Ambitious to found a family, he got into debt, and in old age he was a ruined man. When about to leave Abbotsford for the last time, he said: "When I think of what this place now is, with what it was not long ago, I feel as if my heart would break. Lonely, aged, deprived of all my family, I am an impoverished and embarrassed man." At another time he writes: "Death has closed the dark avenue of love and friendships. I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with the monuments of those who once were dear to me, and with no other wish than that it may open for me at no distant period." And again: "Some new objection or complaint comes every moment. Sicknesses come thicker and thicker; friends are fewer and fewer. The recollections of youth, health, and powers of activity neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor ground of comfort. The best is, the long halt will arrive at length and close all." And the long halt did arrive. Not long before he died, Sir Walter Scott requested his daughter to wheel him to his desk. She then put a pen into his hand, but his fingers refused to do their office. Silent tears rolled down his cheeks. "Take me back to my own room," he said; "there is no rest for Sir Walter but in his grave." A few days after this he died, realizing, in reference to all his fame, honour, and renown, the truth of Solomon,

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Campbell, the author of the 'Pleasures of Hope,' in his old age wrote: "I am alone in the world. My wife and the child of my hopes are dead; my surviving child is consigned to a living tomb—a lunatic asylum; my old friends, brothers, sisters, are dead, all but one, and she too is dying; my last hopes are blighted. As for fame, it is a bubble that must soon burst. Earned for others, shared with others, it was sweet; but at my age, to my own solitary experience, it is bitter. Left in my chamber alone by myself, is it wonderful my philosophy at times takes flight; that I rush into company, resort to that which blunts but heals no pang; and then, sick of the world, and dissatisfied with myself, shrink back into solitude?" And in this state of mind he died.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the great orator, made an almost similar confession. He perished in wretchedness and want. His last words were: "I am absolutely undone."—*Preacher's Lantern.*

Ver. 13. *Honour from man.* The meaning of the words, "In honour preferring one another," appears to be this: Consider all your brethren are more worthy than yourself; and let neither grief nor envy affect your mind at seeing another honoured and yourself neglected. This is a hard lesson, and very few persons learn it thoroughly. If we wish to see our brethren honoured, still it is with the secret condition in our own minds that we be honoured more than they. We have no objection to the elevation of others, provided we may be at the head. But who can bear to be even what he calls neglected? I once heard the following conversation between two persons, which the reader will pardon my relating, as it appears to be rather in point, and worthy of regard. "I know not," said one, "that I neglect to do anything in my power to promote the interests of true religion in this place, and yet I seem to be held in very little repute, scarcely one person even noticing me." To which the other replied: "My good friend, set yourself down for nothing, and if any person takes you for something, it will all be clear gain." I thought this a queer saying; but how full of meaning and common sense! Whether the object of this good counsel was profited by it I cannot tell; but I looked on it and received instruction.—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

Ver. 13. *The Caterpillar. An Allegory.* "Patience! patience! until I become a butterfly, and then I shall laugh at all my enemies." This was a common saying with a caterpillar, while it was yet a caterpillar. At last the moment of its transformation came. On a beautiful summer's morning it arose out of its dark sepulchre, dressed in a rich golden attire, and strong in the strength of a new life. "Yes," said she, as she looked upon herself, "now I am satisfied with nature! now I am safe!" But alas! she erred. A single leaf could screen the dark-hued caterpillar from many enemies, even from the sharp-sighted hunter of insects. Now, as a many-coloured butterfly, she shone in radiant beauty, drew on her the eyes of a hundred pursuers, and saw only too soon the impossibility of eluding them all. In vain she plied her new-born wings with diligence, in vain she flew fearfully from bough to bough, from flower to flower. The craft of her enemies surprised her after all, and on the third day she was impaled upon the murderous needle of an entomologist. A dazzling glory is often the forerunner of destruction.—*Meissner.*

Ver. 13. *The death of Saladin.* About this time (1193) died the great Sultan Saladin, the greatest terror of the Christians, who, mindful of man's fragility, and the vanity of worldly honours, commanded at the time of his death no solemnity to be used at his burial; but only his shirt, in manner of an ensign, made fast unto the point of a lance, to be carried before his dead body as an ensign, a plain priest going before, and crying aloud unto the people in this sort: "Saladin, Conqueror of the East, of all the greatness and riches he had in this life carrieth not with him anything more than his shirt." A sight worthy so great a king, as wanted nothing to his eternal condemnation more than the true knowledge of his salvation in Christ Jesus. He reigned about sixteen years with great honour.—*Cary's Dante. Notes.*

Ver. 13. *Alexander and the Cynic.* Alexander, the great monarch of the world, was discontented because ivy would not grow in his gardens at Babylon; but the Cynic was herein more wise, who finding a mouse in his satchel, said, he saw that himself was not so poor but some were glad of his leavings. Thus, had we but hearts to improve higher providences, we might soon rock our peevish spirits quiet by much stronger arguments; as to take notice of God's bountiful dealing with us, that we are less than the least of his mercies; that though we be not set in the highest form, yet there are many below us; that God is our good benefactor,—this would bring us to that pass, as to conclude with ourselves, having food and raiment, therewith to be content; and though we were many times cut short of creature accommodations, yet this would limit our desires after them, and make us rest assured that nothing is withdrawn or withheld from us which might be really advantageous to us.—*Spencer.*

Ver. 13. *Apologue of a Bird-catcher.* There is an old apologue of a bird-catcher, who having taken a nightingale, the poor bird pleaded for herself as well as she could, and seeing divers go to the pot before her, said, "Alas; I am not worth the killing; I have little or no flesh on my back, therefore you may well let me go." "No," says the fowler, "one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." The bird replies, that her notes were worth more than her corpse, and that she would chant him out three songs, for which he should fare the better all the days of his life, if he kept them, than if he killed her. The bargain was made, and the bird let fly; the songs were these—

1. Strive not beyond thy strength.
2. Grieve not too much for the loss of that which cannot be recovered.
3. Believe not that which is incredible.

Now, whilst the wise bird-catcher was conning

these lessons, the bird flying over his head told him that he had lost a great treasure; for she had within her head a precious stone as big as an ostrich egg. At this news the birder began to ply the nightingale in fair words, and told her, that if she would come again to his hand he would spare the meat out of his own belly to feed her. Then answered the bird: "Now I see thou art a fool indeed; thou canst make no good use of my counsel; for, first thou labourest for me whom thou canst not reach; secondly, thou grievest for that which is irrecoverable; and thirdly, thou believest that which no wise man will, that I have a pearl in my head as big as an ostrich egg, whereas all my whole body is not so big." Thus, surely, there are many of these fowlers, or rather foolers, in the world, such as doat in their reposals, setting up their rest in the things of this world, where it is not to be found, and in the mean time neglect to seek where it is; for the world hath no more sufficiency to man's desire than the nightingale had the true pearl within her to give him content; all the advantages of outward things being to man's desire but as sharp sauce to the appetite, which doth not satisfy hunger, but provoke the stomach to hunger after more.—*Spencer.*

Ver. 13. *What Diogenes can do without.* Diogenes walked on a day with his friend to see a country fair, where he saw ribands, and looking-glasses, and nut-crackers, and fiddles, and hobby-horses, and many other gimcracks; and having observed them, and all the other finnimbrums to make a complete country fair, he said to his friend, "How many things there are in this world, of which Diogenes hath no need!" And truly it is so, or might be so, with very many who vex and toil themselves to get what they have no need of. Can any man charge God that he hath not given him enough to make his life happy? No, doubtless; for nature is content with a little; and yet you shall hardly meet with a man that complains not of some want; and thus, when we might be happy and quiet, we create trouble to ourselves. I have heard of a man that was angry with himself because he was no taller, and of a woman who broke her looking-glass because it would not show her face to be as young and handsome as her next neighbour's was. And I knew another, to whom God had given health and plenty, but a wife that nature had made peevish, and her husband's riches had made purse-proud, and must, because she was rich, and of no other virtue, sit in the highest pew in the church; which, being denied her, she engaged her husband into a contention for it; and at last, into a lawsuit with a dogged neighbour, who was as rich as he, and had a wife as peevish and purse-proud as the other; and this lawsuit begot higher oppositions, and actionable words, and more vexations and lawsuits; for you must remember that both were rich, and must therefore have their wills. Well, this wilful purse-proud lawsuit lasted during the life of the first husband; after which his wife vexed and chid, and chid and vexed, till she also chid and vexed herself into her grave; and so the wealth of these poor rich people was cursed into a punishment, because they wanted meek and thankful hearts; for those only can make us happy.—*Izaack Walton.*

Ver. 13. *Joseph Brotherton.* In Peel Park, Manchester, a monument is erected to Joseph Brotherton, having on it this statement, "My riches consist not in the extent of my possessions, but in the fewness of my wants." How happy most could be if their wants were not so many. The great majority want vastly more than is actually needful.

Ver. 13. *Byron's lameness.* It was said of Byron by Goethe, that he was inspired by the Genius of Pain; for, from the first to the last of his agitated career, every fresh recruitment of his faculties was imbibed from that bitter source. His chief incentive, when a boy, to distinction, was the mark of deformity on his person, by an acute sense of which he was first stung into the ambition of being great. In one of his letters to Mr. Hunt, he declares it to be his own opinion that "an addiction to poetry is very generally the result of 'an uneasy mind in an uneasy body;' disease or deformity," he adds, "had been the attendants of many of our best. Collins mad—Chatterton, I think, mad—Cowper mad—Pope crooked—Milton blind," &c. &c. His reverend friend, Mr. Becher, finding him one day unusually dejected, endeavoured to cheer and rouse him, by representing, in their highest colours, all the various advantages with which Providence had endowed him—and among the greatest, that of "a mind which placed him above the rest of mankind." "Ah, my dear friend," said Byron mournfully, "if *this* (laying his hand on his forehead) places me above the rest of mankind, *that* (pointing to his foot) places me far, far below them." "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL NOTES.] **1. On . . . sleep**] Heb. the king's sleep fled away, an unusual thing. "**That night**] which succeeded the events of the last chapter, settled with apparently a most ominous cloud upon the future of Mordecai, but it was the harbinger of a most auspicious day for him. God, who works in the darkness as in the light, caused sleep to flee from the king, and disposed him to beguile the wakeful hours, not with music or song, but by having one to read to him from the **book of records of the chronicles**] His mind was in a mood to ruminate on the events of his own life, and the State annals were called for to assist his memory. Rawlinson thinks that the Persian kings were in most cases unable to read."—*Whedon's Com.* **They were read before the king**] These were in the act of being called over. In the original there is a participle which denotes the long continuance of this reading. **2.**] The name Bigthana is in ii. 21 written Bigthan. **3.**] The king's question means what honour and reward has been assigned him? What has been apportioned? How has he been requited? "It was a settled principle of the Persian government that royal benefactors were to receive an adequate reward, the names of such persons were placed on a special roll, and great care was taken that they should be properly recommended. It is a mistake, however, to suppose (*Davidson*) that they were always rewarded *at once*. Themistocles was inscribed on the list in B.C. 480, but did not obtain a reward till B.C. 465. Other benefactors waited for months, or perhaps years, before they were recompensed. Sometimes a benefactor received no reward at all."—*Rawlinson.* The king's servants answered: Nothing has been shown him. No favour has been shown him. No greatness, *i. e.* no promotion to honour. **4.**] The question, **Who is in the court?**] means what officer is now present. The king desires to consult with him as to what distinction would be appropriate to Mordecai. It seems that those desiring to be admitted to the king's presence had to wait in the outer court.—*Lange.* From this question of the king it appears that it was already morning. **5.**] Haman was waiting in the outer court, till it should be announced that the king was ready to grant audiences. The king commands, **Let him come in**] (a short order) namely, into the house of the king. **6.**] When the king had asked the question, Haman thought within himself, **To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?**] Going beyond me, more than myself.—*Lange.* **7.**] Haman was quickly prepared to give answer, and without any difficulty called up one distinction or honour after another. **8, 9.**] The royal garment is one which the king has already worn. Hence not an ordinary state-robe, the so-called Median apparel which the king himself, the chief princes among the Persians, and those on whom the king bestowed such raiment were wont to appear in, but a costly garment the property of the sovereign himself. The highest mark of honour to the subject. So too was the riding upon a horse on which the king had ridden, and whose head was adorned with a royal crown. We translate literally; and a horse on which the king is wont to ride, and on whose head is set a royal crown. We do not, indeed, find among the classical writers any testimony to such an adornment of the royal steed; but the circumstance is not at all improbable, and seems to be corroborated by ancient remains, certain Assyrian and ancient Persian sculptures representing the horses of the king, and apparently those of princes, with ornaments on their heads, terminating in three points, which may be regarded as a kind of crown.—*Keil* (abridged). **10, 11.**] This honour, then, the haughty Haman was now compelled to pay to the hated Jew. That Mordecai was a Jew and accustomed to sit in the king's gate could be well known to him from the records of the chronicle of the empire or from the courtiers, who read the history to him, and who had doubtless also given him still other information respecting Mordecai. **12—14.**] It is quite consonant with Oriental notions that Mordecai, after receiving the extraordinary honours assigned him, should return to the palace and resume his former humble employment, Ahasuerus regarding him as sufficiently rewarded, and not yet intending to do anything more for him.—*Rawlinson.* Haman, with covered head and sorrowful heart, hastens home to his friends and wife only to hear the discouraging prophecy that the unfortunate occurrence will be the beginning of his end. To cover the head was a sign of deep shame and distress. His friends are now called **wise men**] at least some of them, because they undertook to forecast his future.—*Lange.* His diviners now hesitate not to predict his fall. If his enemy is of the **seed of the Jews**] a new and startling fact that seems suddenly to have impressed these wise men; then it is certain that the providence which has ever been such a wondrous power in the Jewish nation, and which has now so strangely elevated Mordecai at the very moment when Haman thought to have slain him, will cause the Jew to triumph. **Hasted to bring Haman**] The avenging Fates seem to hurry him to his doom.—*Whedon's Com.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 1.

A HUMILIATED KING.

IT is not to be presumed that this was the only night on which the king found it impossible to command the recuperating services of that sleep which is nature's sweet restorer. Other nights there were, most likely, when the king could not sleep. But on those other nights there might be found satisfactory explanations of the sleeplessness. There may have been physical pain preventing the enjoyment of sweet repose. There were visible or ascertainable causes to account for the unusual restlessness. On this occasion the king could not sleep, and yet he could not account for the restless condition. How is it that I cannot sleep? I have no physical pain. I have no fears. I am not conscious of danger. All appears to be much as it has been on other nights when I have enjoyed repose. The king was now touched by a hand that he could not see. The king was now moved and controlled by a power that he did not acknowledge. An unseen and irresistible force now rendered uneasy the couch on which the mighty monarch in vain sought for sleep. Kings have their master. Sleepy and sleepless kings have their humiliating conditions. All are in a state of subjection. God can at all times use us for his great purposes, but he has need of wakeful creatures. Even kings must not sleep when the Great King has work to be performed. Here is a lesson for all. We must be willing to sacrifice sleep when God's Church and God's world has pressing claims upon our immediate service.

I. A king in need. Eastern monarchs sought by the pomp of circumstances to separate themselves from their subjects, and thus to maintain a condition of superiority. At all times monarchs have been regarded by the vast majority as superior beings. Yet it is plain, and a truism to assert, that kings have their needs as well as subjects. They too are human, and require those helps which are needful to the rest of humanity. Ahasuerus, the monarch ruling over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, seeks for sleep just as the meanest peasant seeks for sleep in his rude cot. Sleep is said to be the image of death. As the latter, so the former is a great leveller. They know no distinctions of rank. They do not recognize the gorgeous trappings of royalty. A sleeping king is just as helpless as a sleeping beggar. What becomes of our greatness when we are compelled to sleep? The beggar in his sleep may dream himself to be possessed of vast wealth. For a beggar may have his pleasant dreams; while kings may be haunted with the nightmare. Kings must sleep, or kings must die. Kings too must sleep the final sleep; the sleep from which there is only one awakening. We all must sleep the great sleep of death. How often have we laid ourselves down to sleep, and yet it may be, that many of us have never thought of this sleep prefiguring our last sleep? Death is near to us, not only by our liability to accident and to disease, but by its image in our nightly sleep. When death comes will it find us ready? Shall we lie down to sleep with the assured conviction that we shall awake in the resurrection of the just?

II. Thus a king in subjection. A king ruling and yet ruled. He is in subjection to the law that sleep is a necessity of nature. Kings are under law. They even cannot violate the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, with impunity. Philosophers may assume kingly prerogatives. They may patronize nature and nature's God. They may talk in grandiloquent terms about how the universe was framed, and how it ought to be framed. But philosophers must sleep. Philosophers must humbly bow and submit themselves to this humiliating condition. A philosopher snoring is a withering irony on a philosopher talking. Who could believe that the philosopher recumbent, wrapped in the embraces of

sleep, is the same being as the philosopher erect, defying with his tongue all the powers in earth and in heaven? If the kings of men own no other kingly power, they must place themselves in subjection to king sleep. This is one of the great sovereigns that rules humanity. It will not be denied. It demands its offering of time. If the offering be not constantly presented, it comes with awful vengeance. Sleep is the messenger that death sends before to tell of his coming. Mighty sleep, but mightier death! Sleep is a king ruling gently and sweetly. Death is a king ruling sternly and dreadfully. God is a king mightier than either sleep or death. They rule only with delegated authority. They too are subject. God can take away sleep, as he did on that night when Ahasuerus could not sleep. God can stay death as he did in the cases of Enoch and of Elijah. If we would sweetly sleep and calmly die, we must sleep resting assured that He is our friend who giveth to his beloved sleep; we must die in Jesus Christ. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." When the day is drawing to a close, when night is throwing the sable curtains about a bright and busy world, when the exhausted system is seeking the help of its restorer, and is wooing the sweet embraces of balmy sleep; how delightful to feel that in seeking the earthly rest we get a type of the heavenly rest, and to say to the body, Return to rest on that pillow which will one day lose its power to soothe; to the soul, Return to rest on that bosom of Divine love which will never fail in its comforting and recruiting influences. When life's evening is drawing to its close, when earth can no more give rest, when with trembling feet we are treading the darkest valley of all, how great the peace if we can feel that we are going to rest for ever where no adverse forces will disturb the divine repose.

III. A king in defeat. Kings have their defeats as well as common men; not only on the battle-field, not only in the national councils, but in the ordinary circumstances of life. Here a king is defeated. Ahasuerus seeks sleep, and yet it refuses to come at his request. He cannot now secure the boon which is obtained by the meanest subject in his realm. All material appliances are at his command, and yet sleep will not be compelled. Sweet music cannot lull to repose where it is denied. Soft couches and splendid drapery cannot always compel the embraces of sleep. It is coy and fickle; and sometimes when most earnestly sought, it appears to fly the farthest away. At other times when not sought at all it comes readily. On that night could not the king sleep. The king is defeated. Here is a lesson for Ahasuerus if he had only been wise. What a lesson on our limitations! Here is a lesson for all. We may know our weakness, and yet we will not bow in lowly reverence to the Great Supreme. How humble should all men be in the presence of their limitations! How little reason has a proud man to vaunt himself of his greatness!

IV. A king in subjection commands. He commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles. He commands because he is commanded. He was commanded not to sleep. He was also commanded to turn his attention in sleepless hours to the book of records of the chronicles. Here we have doubtless the case of an ungodly man under Divine inspiration. It may be said that it was only a freak on the part of the king. He was restless and did not know what to do with himself, and so he turned to these royal records. Such a freak, however, is unaccountable unless we suppose him unconsciously directed from heaven. It would have been more natural for him to have commanded the presence of a musician to bring forth dulcet strains to soothe the restless nature. Or to have called for some calmly entertaining story. Or to have summoned the doctor to administer, so as to settle the perturbation. Imagine the Queen on some sleepless night calling for the Blue Book to be brought into her presence. Picture yourselves asking for police statistics, for the records of crime, when sleep forsakes in the dark and stilly night; why it would be enough to drive sleep away. It may be supposed that Ahasuerus asked for these chronicles as being dry reading and

calculated to induce slumber, just as some people take a volume of old dry divinity to bed to read: just as some people go to church in order to get slumber. Still the case is not altered. However it came about in human working, it was settled in Divine purpose that Ahasuerus must read in these records, and read at the particular part of those records relating to Mordecai. Ungodly men may be under Divine inspiration. God can use the wicked. But God will use the good for their own greater good; for the good of others, and for his own glory. Let us seek to be good, and ready for Divine uses. When we cannot sleep, when an unusual restlessness takes hold of our nature, what should we summon to our aid? Should we not ask for the book of the Divine records? Let us seek ever to God's word. Let us find in it light in the darkest nights, repose in the most restless periods, and help in our varied weaknesses.

V. A king in defeat listens. A king in defeat is more likely to listen than a king triumphant. The records of the chronicles were read before the king. Dull reading no doubt, but still he listened. When the attention is properly engaged, then the dullest reading becomes interesting. It would require a skilful reader to make these chronicles attractive and lively. This king we may well imagine did not look for the nicely modulated voice. He was Divinely directed to take a special interest—an interest he had never felt previously; yea, it is likely he had never heard the records before—in these dull chronicles. Our times of humiliation are mostly our best times of listening. Our times when we are under Divine impulses are our times for receiving with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls. Let us be in earnest as the Divine records are read in our hearing. Let the attention be thoroughly aroused and awake to the subject matter, and then the manner of the speaker will be of comparatively small importance. With some the voice of the messenger is the all-important concern. The message should be that which commands and engages the supreme attention. This defeated king listens with intelligent interest. He notes the very point which is requisite for the working out of Divine purposes; as we shall see more fully in the after-part of this narrative. Let then the whole mind be engaged while the Divine records are being proclaimed. The head as well as the heart must be employed. Listen, for important interests are at stake. Listen for your own benefit, and thus you will become of benefit to others. Ahasuerus listened for himself, and in thus listening he became a true service to Mordecai and all his people. Good listeners help to make good readers and good doers. They benefit both themselves and the community at large.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 1.

God has employed sleep for weighty purposes, in various ages of the world. It was while Adam was in "deep sleep," that "one of his ribs was taken," and made a living being, and an help meet for him. It was while Jacob was asleep, that he was favoured with that wonderful vision, in which he beheld a ladder set upon the earth, whose top reached to heaven—a striking representation of God's providential care for his people; and likewise of that Redeemer, who is the way to the Father—a way, in which whosoever walketh, the angels of glory continually afford to him their friendly ministrations. It was when Joseph was asleep, that he was directed from heaven to take Mary for his wife; because that which had been conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost. He was in the same condition, when he was warned from above to take the Holy Child with his mother to Egypt, to avoid the death intended him by Herod; and when he was ordered to bring him back to Judea, after death had taken that cruel tyrant from the earth. But here God carries his purposes into execution by means of the *absence* of sleep. He is never at a loss to bring his designs to pass. All things are in his hand, and he maketh them all, even those most contrary to each other, to work together for the good of his chosen. "He hath put *all things* under

the feet" of Christ and given him to be the head over *all things to the Church*, for the benefit of his believing people.

Sleep, my brethren, is the gift of God, and an invaluable mercy. Our feeble frames require it frequently, and the Lord frequently imparts it. It re-animates our drooping spirits, and re-invigorates our wearied limbs: with grateful hearts ought we then to say with David, "I laid me down and slept. I awaked: for the Lord sustained me." But precious as is this gift, if we employ the bodies, whose weakness demands these frequent cessations from labour, in the service of him that bought them, they shall be ere long in a condition in which it will not be needed. Our resurrection bodies will be as active as our spirits, and with them will serve God without fatigue, without intermission, throughout eternity. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."

When Ahasuerus was thus supernaturally robbed of his sleep, he commanded the records of the empire to be brought before him. He might have fixed upon many other ways of beguiling the slowly passing hours: but this tended to facilitate the object which Esther had in view; therefore her God disposed the king to adopt it. If he had ordered instruments of music to be brought before him (which was customary among the Eastern monarchs, Dan. vi. 18), he might have diverted his mind, and possibly rendered his sleepless hours pleasurable; but, in that case, Mordecai would not have come to his mind: the fidelity of that subject, which he had forgotten, and by which his life had been preserved, had remained still in forgetfulness, and nothing would have been done towards the accomplishment of Esther's design. Let our contemplation of God's wisdom and overruling power herein, constrain us to say, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen."—*Hughes.*

Ver. 1. *On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.*

The king could not sleep, any more than we, when he pleased. Of what use, some will say, is royal dignity, if it cannot procure sleep to the wearied eyelids? A king, by the wise administration of government, may procure sleep to his people; on the contrary, by his oppression, he may cause many wearisome nights to his subjects, in which their sorrows will not suffer them to sleep. But the regal dignity will not insure sleep to him who enjoys it. It is more likely to debar his eyes from rest by those anxious cares which attend it; or by those uneasy reflections which attend the abuse of power. Labour, and a good conscience, will procure sweeter sleep than all the riches in the world.

On that night could not the king sleep.—On what night? The night preceding the decisive day on which Esther was to present her petition, and the morning on which Haman had a petition of an opposite kind to be presented to the king. Observe how Divine Providence kept sleep from the eyes of Ahasuerus, to serve its own gracious purposes. It is said that "God giveth his beloved sleep." But he sometimes too withholds sleep from them for good purposes; and he sometimes hath withheld sleep from other persons, or disturbed it with strange dreams, for their benefit. A dream was sent to Pharaoh, that Joseph should be delivered from his prison, and exalted to power. Another dream was sent to Nebuchadnezzar, to procure the exaltation of Daniel and his friends. Ahasuerus was kept from sleep, that he might not suffer Mordecai to be hanged.

It is of great use to know how to improve those moments of the night in which we are debarred from sleep. Ahasuerus, it seems, thought he could not employ his waking moments better than by hearing the chronicles of his reign. Here too we may observe the superintending care of Providence. Why did not a prince, who delighted in pleasure, rather call for the melody of the harp and viol, than for the chronicles of his reign? It was the will of God that he should be put in mind of what Mordecai had done for him, because now the fit time was come that he should receive the reward of his fidelity.

"Blessings on him," says Sancho Panza, "who invented sleep." This is a sentiménts in which all the world will agree. Sleep is, indeed, as much the true remedy for the troubles and worries of the mind, as it is for the fatigues of the body. In every one's life there are occasions when the gloom of the present is only exceeded by the darkness of the future. If there were no such thing as sleep, a man would succumb either mentally or bodily; he would die of exhausted nervous power, or if it were possible for him to live, would become a maniac.

After some hours of the deepest mental distress, relief is usually brought by sleep, and the sufferer feels his exhausted powers revive. He wakes with the memory of his troubles still present to his mind, but also feeling that he is better prepared to face them. The keenness by which they wound him is somewhat blunted; and this gradual process of blunting is nightly repeated. Thus, by causing intermission in our troubles, it is that "tired nature's sweet restorer" reanimates our drooping spirits. Sleep was supposed to be caused by accumulation of blood in the head; and in support of this view the facts have been advanced, that full-blooded people are usually the best sleepers, and that the recumbent position which promotes the flow of blood to the brain, induces sleep. But it is now the most generally received opinion, that sleep is caused by a withdrawal of blood from the brain. In perfect sleep there is no consciousness. It has been, therefore, called with truth the image of death. It is a temporary death, as far as concerns all action and motion which lie under the power of the will. But although the brain is at rest, the heart and lungs continue their tasks, because they are presided over by a department of the nervous system which acts independently of the brain. The brain is the seat of consciousness, and from it all the nerves which originate and control voluntary motions take their rise more or less directly. The intellectual faculties sometimes continue active during sleep. La Fontaine made admirable verses in his sleep. Alexander is said to have planned battles. In the same way mathematicians have solved problems, and school-boys have accomplished tasks.—*Physiology for Practical Use.*

Earthly crowns often sit heavily on the monarch's head:—

> O polished perturbation! golden care,
> That keeps the ports of slumber open wide
> For many a watchful night.

Ver. 1. This is as it is written in the Psalm: "He suffered no man to do them wrong; nay, he rebuked even kings for their sake." For the pious are so great a care to God, that in order to preserve them he does not even spare kings, but brings upon them various calamities.—*Brenz.*

Let every one bear in mind day and night that pious proposition of Augustine concerning the solicitude of God for his saints: so day and night dost thou watch for my safeguard as if, forgetful of thy whole creation in heaven and earth, thou considerest me alone, and hadst no care for others.—*Feuardent.*

O Lord, it is good to trust in thee in the expectation of thy help! Thou dost continually watch over the souls left in thy care, and thou dost even wait until things have come to extremities, in order to cause the greater exercise of faith, so that none may despair of thy assistance, still at the right time thou art ever ready to help. What indeed is more natural than that a king could not sleep, and that he should wish something read to him? It is this altogether natural, yet wonderful, leading, which causes the hearts of those who experience it to rejoice! To all other hearts this is dark. This wise, Divine Providence is still unknown to those who only live in and for themselves. —*Berl. Bible.*

"He that keepeth Israel, and neither slumbereth nor sleepeth," causeth sleep that night to depart from him that had decreed to root out Israel. Great Ahasuerus, that commanded a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, cannot command an hour's sleep. Poverty is rather blessed with the freedom of rest, than wealth and power. Cares and surfeit withhold that from the great, which passeth upon the spare diet and labour of the meanest. Nothing is more tedious than an eager pursuit of denied sleep,

which, like to a shadow, flies away so much faster as it is more followed.—*Bishop Hall.*

God gives sleep to the bad, in order that the good may be undisturbed.—*Sadi.*

Oh, sleep, sweet sleep! whatever form thou takest, thou art fair, holding unto our lips thy goblet fill'd out of oblivion's well, a healing draught.—*Longfellow.*

Could not the king sleep.] Heb. the king's sleep fled away, and, like a shadow, it fled away so much the faster as it was more followed. Sleep is best solicited by neglect, and soonest found when we have forgotten to seek it. They are likeliest for it who together with their clothes can put off their cares, and say as Lord Burleigh did when he threw off his gown, "Lie there, Lord Treasurer." This great Ahasuerus cannot do at present, for crowns also have their cares, thistles in their arms and thorns in the sides. Lo, he that commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces cannot command an hour's sleep. How should he when sleep is God's gift? And it was that at this time kept him awake for excellent ends, and put small thoughts in his heart for great purpose, like as he did into our Henry VIII, when the Bishop of Baion (the French ambassador) coming to consult with him about a marriage between the Lady Mary and the Duke of Orleans, cast a scruple into his mind which rendered him restless, whether Mary were legitimate ('Life and Death of Card. Wolsey,' 65). If it were his surfeiting and drunkenness the day before that hindered Ahasuerus from sleeping, God's goodness appeareth the more, in turning his sin to the good of the Church. Venenum aliquando pro remedio fuit, saith Seneca. He can make poisonful viper a wholesome treacle; and by an almighty alchemy draw good out of evil.—*Trapp.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 2, 3.

A King's Sorrow for an Unrewarded Subject.

The chronicles of earthly kings are concealing. The chronicles of the heavenly King are revealing. In the former, events may be recorded and forgotten. In the latter, events are recorded and remembered. For five or six years the conspiracy discovered and exposed by Mordecai had been recorded in the book of records of the chronicles. It must have remained thus for ever, had it not been, as men say, revealed by accident; but by what we ought to say, the direct interposition of God. The records of the heavenly state are not managed in the same loose fashion. All that is needful will be ultimately brought to light. Mordecai had to wait because the Persian king was either ungrateful or unmindful. Saints may have to wait, not because God is either unmindful or unwilling to reward faithful service, but because the proper season has not come for the fulfilment of his purposes. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." Now consider the state of Ahasuerus after listening to the reading of this account concerning the conspiracy of Bigthana and Teresh; and its discovery by Mordecai.

I. The working of remorse. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? The gloomy and sleepless night is a season well calculated to bring about mournful reflections. Then the brain is busy, and the memory works with unwonted activity. Thoughts come and go in quick succession. As instantaneously there flashes before the drowning man his whole life, so often on the sleepless bed there appears the ghostly army of our past deeds, and especially misdeeds. It is a season for the working of remorse. And we can easily suppose that Ahasuerus required no reading of the dull chronicles in order to stir up grief for past deeds. His mind is not now diverted by the pomp and

circumstance of his great position. His mind was now ready to fix upon this one fact, that a deserving man had been unrewarded. He at once wakes up to the fact of his ingratitude, and asks the question about Mordecai's reward. The eagerness with which he asks the question, the promptness with which he proceeds, and the energy with which he resists the blandishments of his favourite minister, show that his better nature was asserting itself; for even Ahasuerus had a better nature. The mighty monarch may well say, How ungrateful have I been! Here is a man to whom I owe my life left pining in obscurity.

II. The working of repentance. Ahasuerus might have asked the question in a penitent mood, and then have dismissed the subject from his mind. Too many, in moments of remorse, utter a few well-coined phrases, and then let the affair pass away. Even in such cases it is not fair to say that there was no true feeling for the time being, for we are strange mixtures; the subjects of fitful changes, good this moment and bad the next. But the question of Ahasuerus taken in connection with his after conduct, evinces that there was just then the working of a right spirit. He desired, and set himself, to make the only reparation in his power. He had been unmindful of great services, but he will be unmindful no longer. He seems to ask with noble resolve what honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Repentance is not merely to weep over a remediless past, but to do justice to those who have suffered from our previous neglect, or to repair as far as possible the injustice we have done them. One of the Divine requirements is "to do justly." In order to carry out this precept, the man who has suffered from our injustice must have his wrongs righted. Ahasuerus sets himself to do justly to Mordecai. Already the purpose is being formed in his mind to heap upon this man the highest honours, as if to make amends for past neglect. Well was it for the king and for the subject that Mordecai had not passed away beyond the reach of Ahasuerus. Then the king could simply have erected a monument to his memory. This is the mode in which too many seek to still the voice of conscience The hero starves in a garret. The benefactor pines in obscurity, and battles with poverty, is worsted in the contest, and dies a victim on the altar of ingratitude. Then the nation rouses itself to an appreciation of the good man's claims. A costly monument celebrates his worth, but no line is written to tell of vile neglect, and of a nation's base ingratitude. Even the luxurious and weak-minded Ahasuerus may speak a lesson to those who build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; but who persecute the living prophets, and are blind to the worth of the living righteous.

III. A voice from the guilty past. Then said the king's servants that minister unto him, There is nothing done for him. The voices of the present are too often but echoes of the past. Ahasuerus was too deaf during six years to hear the still small voice which said there is nothing done for the deserving Mordecai. The voice gathers force and volume, and now it comes like a thunder-clap to the soul of Ahasuerus as the servants say there is nothing done for him. Neglected duty has a voice; if we hear and at once obey, much sorrow will be prevented. If we are deaf, purposely deaf, the voice goes on speaking, and in the dreary night, when all is still, when the soul is awake, it speaks with tremendous emphasis. If then we listen and repent destruction may be prevented. If we still refuse to hear the voice will speak once more, when the only response can be, It is now too late. Let us listen to the voices of the present. Do they echo our past? Do they say there is nothing done where much ought to have been done. Let us pray for Divine mercy through Jesus Christ to blot out our past; and for Divine grace to remedy the past as far as possible, and to do nobler and better in the future. The king listened eagerly and penitently to those preachers who had only a tale of misdoing to tell; for not-doing is in many cases misdoing. Wise are those hearers who listen to the preacher who declares there is nothing done where much was rightly expected. The king's servants proclaim their own guilt. There is nothing

done for him. We have waited and never urged the claims of good Mordecai. Sometimes in proclaiming the injustice of others we pronounce our own guilt. Thou that reprovest Ahasuerus because he has done nothing for Mordecai, what hast thou done for the benefit of the neglected man? Thou that ravest about a nation's neglected heroes, what hast thou done for the heroes round about thee, for the heroes whose heroism is not on a large scale, for the heroes who tread the quiet walks of life, but whose aggregated worth constitute a nation's safety. Neglected heroes! Unrecognized worth! They seem to meet us everywhere. In the present day it appears too much the case that the only heroism which receives notice is the heroism of boasting. In the heathen kingdom of Persia modest Mordecai meets at last with some reward. In the Christian kingdom of England the modest Mordecais too often pass to the grave, and on their tomb-stones may be written the epitaph: There has nothing been done for them. In the heathen kingdom of Persia the boasting Haman ends on the gallows. In the Christian kingdom of England the boasting Haman sadly often maintains a position of social influence, and crowds follow his remains to the grave. Let the art of graceful puffing be taught in our schools and colleges; let its glories be proclaimed from our pulpits and in our lecture-rooms. No more vainly talk about the virtues of modest merit. The cry is now heard, He is too sensitive to make his way. Solomon said, Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, set not out thy glory. The modern Solomon says, Put thy best foot foremost, set out thy glory, have a good opinion of thyself if thou wouldest rise. Well, never mind, serve thy God by serving thy fellows. God is always doing something for his faithful servants. There is no neglected Mordecai in his kingdom. Let each so live and so act, that pleasant memories may delight the spirit that cannot lose itself in the sweet oblivion of sleep. However we may have neglected our fellows, let it never be said that we have neglected the God-man. When the question is asked, What honour and dignity hath been done by us to Jesus?—let not the reply be heard, There is nothing done for him. Nothing done for Jesus! Nothing done for him who did infinitely much for mankind!—and if we do much for Jesus we should do much for our fellows. He who does not try to serve his race may hear the awful reply: There is nothing done for Jesus. "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren," &c. What room for grief when we hear the question, What honour and dignity hath been done to Jesus for this his great work of saving men? It is high time to repent. Much has been done. But when we consider his claims and our indebtedness and our small sacrifices, we appear to hear a guilty past shouting in thunder tones, There is nothing done for Jesus.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 2, 3.

The king inquired what honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai for this, suspecting that this good service had gone unrewarded, and like Pharaoh's butler remembering it as his fault this day. Note—The law of gratitude is the law of nature. We ought particularly to be grateful to our inferiors, and not to think all their services such debts to us, but that they may make us indebted to them.

Two rules may be gathered from the king's inquiry here:—1. Better honour than nothing. If we cannot, or need not, make a recompense to those who have been kind to us, yet let us do them honour by acknowledging their kindness and owning our obligations to them. 2. Better late than never. If we have long neglected to make grateful returns for good offices done us, let us at length bethink ourselves of our debt.

The servants informed him that nothing had been done to Mordecai for that eminent service; in the king's gate he sat before, and there he sat still. Note—1. It is common for great men to take little notice of their inferiors. The king knew not whether Mordecai was preferred or not till his servants informed him.

High spirits take a pride in being careless and unconcerned about those that are below them and ignorant of their state. The great God takes cognizance of the meanest of his servants, knows what dignity is done them, and what disgrace. 2. Humility, modesty, and self-denial, though in God's account of great price, yet commonly hinder men's preferment in the world. Mordecai rises no higher than the king's gate, while the proud ambitious Haman gets the king's ear and heart; but, though the aspiring rise fast, the humble stand fast. Honour makes proud men giddy, but upholds the humble in spirit. Honour and dignity are rated high in the king's books. He does not ask, What reward has been given Mordecai? what money? what estate? but only, what honour?—a poor thing, and which, if he had not wherewith to support it, would be but a burden. 4. The greatest merits and the best services are often overlooked, and go unrewarded among men. Little honour is done to those who best deserve it, are fittest for it, and would do most good with it. The acquisition of wealth and honour is usually a perfect lottery, in which those who venture least commonly carry off the best prize. Nay—5. Good services are sometimes so far from being a man's preferment that they will not be his protection. Mordecai is at this time, by the king's edict, doomed to destruction, with all the Jews, though it is owned that he deserved a dignity. Those that faithfully serve God need not fear being thus ill paid.—*Matthew Henry.*

Princes should have diligent care that none who have deserved well of the State or of themselves are left to go unrewarded. God knows our acts of kindness; and though we may regard them as lost or ignored, yet he can bring them to the light at the proper time to receive even a greater reward than if they had been immediately rewarded.—*Starke.*

Although men are unmindful of benefits received, and, as Pindar says, "Old thanks sleep," still our Lord God is never forgetful. When God's time for reward has come, then even the zeal of enemies must assist him. However watchful and diligent our enemies may be in order utterly to destroy the righteous, yet all their acts and labours form only the ground of the scene, which by the help of God is made to serve in perfecting the web of his leadings.—*Brenz.*

He could not believe that he had been so thoughtlessly ungrateful, as never to requite for such a length of time a service so eminent as that which Mordecai had performed; and was astonished to hear his servants say that nothing had been done for him.

Let us take a review of our lives, and consider what we have done, or not done. If our memories are good, we shall be surprised at many instances of our conduct, or at our forgetfulness. Have we showed all that sense of gratitude to our benefactors, to which we must acknowledge them to be entitled? Have we not often intended to do what we have never done, although we must blush at the thought that we have not done it? And can we forget, that amongst our benefactors are to be reckoned our parents, and, most of all, God our Maker?

We are taught likewise by this question of Ahasuerus, not to impute to intention what may be the effect merely of inadvertence. We are apt to make louder complaints than we have any reason to make of the ingratitude of those to whom we have performed good offices. Perhaps they have forgotten that they did not requite them. Perhaps their neglects have not originated in depravity of heart, or insensibility to benefits, but in thoughtlessness, as it were, occasioned by the many avocations of other affairs. We cannot indeed justify those who do not with the first opportunity requite benefits received; but we must not aggravate real evils. Who will say that David did not retain a grateful remembrance of what Jonathan had done for him? And yet several years seem to have elapsed, after he was advanced to the regal dignity, before he inquired who were left of the house of Saul, that he might show them the kindness of God for Jonathan's sake; and several more years passed away, before he brought the bones of that beloved friend from Jabesh Gilead

to be interred in the sepulchre of his father.

"There is nothing done for him," said the servants of Ahasuerus. This was a disagreeable truth which they could not conceal from the king. But the evil was not irreparable. Mordecai was still alive, and the king could yet testify his sense of the benefit received.—*Lawson.*

The king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered to him, There is nothing done for him. O ye smooth sycophants, where were your tongues before? Ye were not ignorant of the important service performed by Mordecai. Ye knew well the mean office which he continued to discharge. Why did you not embrace the opportunity which your access to the king's person gave you to remind him of the merits of a neglected servant? You had too many favours to ask for yourselves and your friends. Oh! if Haman had come a little earlier, you would have abetted his plea, and might have been found bearing witness that Mordecai had blasphemed the king and his favourite.

We should not, and good men will not, look for their reward from creatures. The world is full of ingratitude. It is often seen that "the greatest merits and the best services are forgotten, and go unrewarded among men; little honour is done to those who best deserve it, are fittest for it, and would do most good with it."* Modest merit is overlooked, while the aspiring, the ambitious, and the time-serving rise to honour and riches. Nor is ingratitude confined to courts. It is the vice of the low as well as the high—*the sovereign people*, as well as sovereign princes. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard."† Ingratitude to God and to his servants are nearly allied "The children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel."‡ You know who it was that "went about doing good;" and yet, as a reward, the Jews sought to stone, and at last crucified him.

"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."§ The King of heaven has his records—his "book of remembrance," in which are entered not only the good deeds which they have done in his service, but also their dutiful words and their gracious thoughts. This book is not only written before him, but it is always open before him. He whom you serve slumbers not nor sleeps at any time. He stands in no need of remembrancers, and no adversary can poison his ear to their prejudice. He may delay the reward, but he will not baulk their expectations. He "is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name." When the books are opened, he shall read, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

If we are thoroughly convinced of our neglect of duty, and sorry on account of it, we will lose no time in repairing the injury. Satan is always at hand to divert us from a good purpose. Had Ahasuerus delayed acting on his present impressions, a temptation would have assailed him which might have proved too strong, and led him to add cruelty to ingratitude, by taking away the life of one who had preserved his own.

I.

It teaches us how well a good man can afford to wait for the due acknowledg

* Henry.

† Eccles. ix. 14, 15.

‡ Judges viii. 34, 35. § Neh. v. 19.

ment of his uprightness, and for any reward he may need for the good he has done. The conjecture is that six long years had gone by since Mordecai revealed the plot of the chamberlains and saved the king's life, and not even a word of acknowledgment had come to him during all that time. At first he would naturally look for something of the kind, for it was usual, it was kingly, on such occasions to confer honours and give rewards; but as time went on expectation would, of course, diminish, and finally, in all probability, die away, so that when acknowledgment and reward come none is more surprised than he who had ceased to expect them. But what we most admire is his behaviour meantime. If he had been a self-seeking man, he could easily have found means to refresh the king's memory as to his services; but he kept silence. If he had been a malignant man, he might have sought what he would, in that case, have called a just revenge for the ungrateful neglect with which he had been treated, by hatching or falling in with some other plot. But no; he keeps his place, and does his office at the gate quietly and faithfully, and without fail, expecting nothing, complaining of nothing, faithful to duty, and fearing God. And then, how well all turns out in the end! How much better than if the reward had been given at the time! Suppose he had got some gift or office at the time, the answer to the king's question could not have been, "Nothing has been done for him;" and Haman's plot would not have been arrested, but would have rolled on, on wheels of fire, towards the destruction of a whole people. "He that believeth shall not make haste;" God's time is always the best. Six years are to the Lord as so many moments. And God's method of reward and acknowledgment is the best too. Seldom, indeed, does it take in the case of any of his servants a form so dramatic as this. We misapprehend and degrade the dramatic element in this history if we crave the repetition of it. It is brought out here in such tragic splendour in order that the great *moral truth* may be stamped deeply in human memory, and may stand out vividly to the human imagination. You have done some good things in your time which have never been acknowledged, or never adequately rewarded, even as such things go among men. Even a few frank kindly words from the proper quarter would have been something. As it is you are sometimes a little chilled and discouraged by what you feel to be the complete and unwonted neglect. Well, now, don't expect Haman at your door some fine morning with the king's horse, and the royal apparel to make you all purple and gold, and the blaring trumpets to tell all the city what you have done; he is not likely to come; you must do as you can without him. Righteousness is its own reward, and we are never righteous as God would have us be until we feel this deeply and act accordingly.—*Dr. Raleigh.*

And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Lyra saith that he had waited six years for reward and had none. In princes' courts men are sure to meet with two evils, delay and change; not so in heaven. The butler forgat Joseph. Solomon speaketh of a poor man, who by his wisdom had saved the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man; this is the world's wages. Mordecai had saved the king's life and yet is unrewarded. The kings of Persia used to be very bountiful to those that had well deserved of them, or of the commonwealth; calling such Orosangæ, and setting down both their names and their acts in the chronicles, as Herodotus testifieth. Among the rest he mentioned one Phylacus, who was put upon record for his good service to the king, and rewarded with a great deal of land given him. Others had great store of gold and silver, and a gallant house, as Democedes Crotoniales, the physician who cured Darius, had at Susis. It is well known out of Xenophon what rich gifts Cyrus gave to his friends and followers—chains of gold, armlets, bridles bossed with gold, Persian stools called Dorophoricæ. Herodotus telleth us that this Ahasuerus, *alias* Xerxes, gave Megabyzus, for his good service at Babylon, a golden mill weighing six

talents. Plutarch writeth, that he gave Themistocles above two hundred talents, and three cities besides, viz. Magnesia, Lampsacus, and Myuntis, to find him food, and for clothing and furniture two more, viz. Percos and Palæscepsis. How came it then to pass that good Mordecai was so forgotten? Surely it was a great fault in this ungrateful king—but God's holy hand was in it—that Mordecai should not have a present recompense, but that it should be deferred till a fitter opportunity, when God might be more glorified in the preservation of his people and destruction of their enemies. Let us not therefore be weary of well-doing; for (however men deal by us) we shall be sure to reap in due season if we faint not. God best seeth when a mercy will be most sweet and seasonable.—*Trapp*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 4, 5.

The King's Inquiry and Concession.

From the conduct of Haman on this occasion we learn that hate inspires a man with energy. For anything we know to the contrary Haman may be but an active man, one who is prompt in business, and who scarcely allows himself sufficient leisure to take necessary sleep. But in this case the impelling motive is hate. It will not allow him to sleep. At the first dawn of morning he rushes to carry out his nefarious design. He is waiting with eagerness for the king's appearance. He is all alert to set a-going his wily and dark scheme. He is ready to speak unto the king to hang an innocent man. Thus there are too many Hamans. Alas! sadly too many to speak for the destruction of their fellows. Alas! sadly too few to speak for the salvation of their fellows. How this proclaims the depravity of human nature! It rushes to destroy; it creeps to save. It is eager to listen to the voice of hate; it is deaf to the voice of love. Oh, love divine, supplant hate by the sweet force of all-mastering love!

I. **The human inquiry.** The king said, Who is in the court? It does not appear to us likely that the king was aware that Haman was already in the court. The king was evidently still in the bed-chamber, whence he would not see who was waiting outside. He could scarcely have expected Haman at such an early hour. He asks in ignorance. This is characteristic of human inquiries. We are ignorant, and desire to know. We ask for enlightenment. But, further, the king was in perplexity and desired some one to consult. What is to be done to remedy this long neglect? Who is in the court to whom I may speak? This too is characteristic of our humanity. Perplexity will come. In such trial we ask who is in the court? Who will help me in this perplexity? Who is there to whom I may successfully appeal? We seek to men, but they fail. Seek to the court of heaven. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God.

II. **The Divine response.** The king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. God speaks by human voices. Holy men are generally the vehicles of Divine messages, but he can and does make use of unlikely vehicles. These servants, heathen though they were, were God's instruments. They were working out Divine laws. Why did they at once fix upon Haman? Were there no others in the court? Doubtless there were. The true answer is, not that Haman was the favoured minister, but that God directed them to announce Haman's presence. The king did not hear the Divine response in the answer of his servants, but it was there all the same. God is speaking even when we are too deaf to hear. Be swift to hear the Divine response.

III. **The disappointing concession.** And the king said, Let him come in. Earthly kings grant their audiences, but the privileged ones find that the concession is disappointing. Haman found it so to his cost. Better almost for him had the king said, Let him stop out. Even when those who seek the king's presence have

no dark designs there is disappointment. The earthly monarch may say, Let the man come in, and then the monarch lets the man go out as empty as he entered. High hopes have often been raised by a monarch's summons to court, but it has only been a vain parade. No false hopes are raised by King Jesus. Does he say to a man, Let him come in? then he means to enrich; and does he not say it to all? To each the invitation is given, Let him come in, let him come to me. Him that cometh to me I will in no-wise cast out. Even a proud, ambitious, and bloodthirsty Haman may come. How sweet the word—come! Come not to further thy dark designs, Haman; come not to seek help in the promotion of thy schemes of self-aggrandizement; but come to be taught a better way; come to be endowed with a nobler spirit; come to learn, Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy; Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

IV. The joyful but fatal obedience. So Haman came in. Haman did not go in like one moving to the gallows, which in fact he was doing. He was now much nearer that fatal structure than he knew. Had Haman lived in our days he might have thought, This is now the tide in my affairs which should lead on to further glory. But, oh! it was the dark tide leading on to destruction. Haman went in joyful, but came out sorrowful. The rosy morning was bright and beautiful; clouds gather on the evening sky. The lightnings flash and thunder peals in terrific grandeur. What a picture is presented to the mind by those simple words—So Haman came in. Haman's mistake was not in obeying the permission of the king, but in obeying the voice of an evil spirit. Had Haman repented during the night, and gone in a right spirit and with wholesome counsel to the king, all might still have been well. The motive, then, counts for much. Let us look to our motives. A wrong motive will cast a blight on the obedient action. See to it that good deeds arise out of faith in Jesus Christ, out of love for his glory.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 4, 5.

Haman came early, but too late. To us, knowing arrangements made on either side, in the king's mind, and in his favourite's, it is a neck-and-neck race. Who should have the first word? The king has it; Haman is lost! "A single moment to tell Ahasuerus of the persevering insolence of one of his menials: I need not name him; enough to say that he is one of the race doomed all to perish on the thirteenth of Adar, and that I am but anticipating the end ordained for him a few months hence." No, Haman; not a single moment you have for that purpose now or ever. Ahasuerus had no wish to forestall his friend. Had he known that he had a request of his own to present he must have given him permission to state it; and had Haman then only avoided naming Mordecai, the king must have granted his request. It is "another King" who is beforehand with the Jew's enemy.—*Symington.*

And the king said, Let him come in. See here, saith Merlin, a sweet and special providence of God in this, that Ahasuerus should take advice about honouring Mordecai, and not of his servants that attended upon his person, but of Haman then present (though for another purpose); and, concealing the man he means, should Haman say what was fit to be done, and then do it accordingly. Neither the king nor his servants, likely, would ever have thought of doing Mordecai so great honour as Haman prescribed. See here, as in a mirror, how the Lord by a secret providence bringeth about and overruleth the wiles of men, their affairs, times, counsels, words, and speeches, to the fulfilling of his own will and decree; and this when they think least of doing God's will or serving his providence.

So Haman came in, merry and jocund, but went out sad and heavy-hearted. These hosts (profit, pleasure, and preferment), though they welcome us into our inn with smiling countenances, yet, if we watch them not, they will cut our throats in our beds. It is

observed of Edward III., that he had always fair weather at his passage into France and foul upon his return. Pharaoh had fair weather till he was in the heart of the Red Sea. The sun shone fair upon the earth that morning that Lot came out of Sodom, but ere night there was a dismal change. He that lives in the height of the world's blandishments is not far from destruction.—*Trapp.*

Who is in the court? The morning light may have begun to fill his chamber when the king nervously addressed this question to his attendants. He had spent a sleepless night; and might it not be because another conspiracy was being matured against him? Might it not be something of this kind which was troubling the queen? Did he not deserve that it should be concealed from him, since he had done nothing to reward his former preserver? There might be cause for haste,—at least he was impatient of delay; and who was this, at early morn, pacing the outer court of the king's palace, as though also in haste about some great work? Haman. His night's rest had not pacified his thirst for revenge. There was to be the queen's banquet in an after part of the day; and if he was to go in merrily to it he must first have obtained authority for the execution, and had Mordecai hanged on the gallows prepared for him. How fortunate! thought Haman; the king is early astir, and calleth for me. How fortunate! thought the king; my favourite courtier and counsellor is early in the way this morning, and is the best man to whom I can commit this business. Behind the back of each of them there was the providence of God, secretly working out his own purposes of mercy and judgment. "And the king said, Let Haman come in."—*McEwan.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 6, 11.

Self-Flattery Leading to Self-Humiliation.

Outwardly at least self-flattery does not always lead to self-humiliation. But we cannot see and know all. We cannot perceive the bitter stings which must be endured in silence by the conceited man. In his passage through time, in his contact with his fellows, he receives many a stab which he must conceal. And these hidden sores are often the most difficult to endure. After all the herb of humility is a true heart's-ease. The modest man may not make a great position in the world, but he is most likely to possess the invaluable treasure of contentment. Certainly he is not at all likely to find himself in the humiliating position to which poor Haman was reduced. Sooner or later, in some way or another, in time or in eternity, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better is it surely to be of a humble spirit with the lowly. Better to sit with calm resignation with Mordecai at the gate than to be the subject of those great inward shocks, and of those outward humiliating changes, which were endured by the conceited Haman.

I. An artless question addressed to conceit. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? If we may so say there was either designed or undesigned artlessness in this question on the part of king Ahasuerus. The form of the question was just that form calculated to bring out Haman's over-weening self-confidence. The question was artlessly vague, and leaves room for Haman to conclude that he himself was the man whom the king delighted to honour. If the form of the question was designed, if he purposely keeps the name of Mordecai in the background, it shews a skill on the part of the king which the history does not prepare us to expect. However, it was a natural form for the question to take; and simple straightforwardness is often the most direct mode of defeating the schemes of the cunning and of the conceited. It was so in this case. The luxurious monarch proved himself more than a match for the wily politician. However, we may well suppose

that the monarch was moved by the current of events. The form of the question was not merely of the king's own shaping. There was a higher mind suggesting.

II. The reasoning of conceit. A conceited heart is a bad guide in critical junctures. This was a crisis in Haman's history, and, unfortunately for himself, he listened to the hollow reasoning of a conceited heart. Haman's conceit hindered him drawing a correct conclusion. Some of the premises were hidden from Haman, and therefore he was not in a position to construct a perfect syllogism. He should have asked himself, are the premises that I have occupied a high place at court, that I have secured an edict against the Jews, that Mordecai is still sitting at the king's gate neglected, sufficient to warrant me in concluding that I am the man whom the king will most delight to honour? A conceited nature may study all the books on logic that has ever been written, but its reasonings for all that are sure to be faulty. Logicians sometimes speak of vicious reasoning; of this kind of reasoning a conceited nature will be guilty. To be a correct reasoner there must be a clear head, and also, and perhaps much more, a clear heart. Errors of the head most frequently spring from faults of the heart. Take heed to thyself, and then to the doctrine—as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? Of course not. At this moment self was with Haman the sum-total of the universe. Is poor Haman the only one who raises self to a false position, from which it falls with hideous ruin? Alas, to too many men self is the world. There is too much conceit in all. Let there be proper self-love, but let it not degenerate into selfishness.

III. The answer of conceit. It is an unscrupulous and fool-hardy answer. Haman here seems to aim at royal honours. Practically he was guilty of treason. He now asks to have regal honours assigned to himself. Outwardly this could not be charged against him, for he might have pleaded, I am yet in ignorance as to the man whom the king will delight to honour. And it might not have been as plain to the king, and to the listeners, whom Haman meant as it is to us who now read the whole account with the calmness of unprejudiced investigators. If Haman had thought of another self beside his own self as likely to receive these honours he might not have been so lavish in his description of what should be done. How lavish we are in expenditure when myself, ourselves, is the subject of consideration! How thrifty and parsimonious we become when we have to consider the claims of other selves. Self says, Look every man on his own things. Self asks for itself the royal apparel, the royal horse, the royal crown, the royal procession and proclamation. Self practically says, All this for me and the gallows for Mordecai. Is not this a solemn figure? How difficult would it be for the judge to pass sentence on the criminal if he could make his self take the place of the criminal's self? The world would be much altered for the better if each man could consider properly the claims of other selves. How long will it be before the world practically acts out the injunction—Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others? Here conceit aims at the subversion of royal supremacy. There is much conceit at the bottom of republicanism. Conceit does not believe in honouring all men and fearing the king. And is there not much conceit in infidelity? Is there not an effort to destroy Divine supremacy? The pride and the daring of conceit are insufferable. It would overturn thrones. It would if possible overtop the throne and monarchy of God himself.

IV. The fearful blow to conceit. We can easily suppose that the command now given by the king to Haman was more galling than the rope placed round his neck when he was hung on the gallows. How galling to have the honours I had intended for myself given to another, and that other the man I most hate, the man whose destruction I have most earnestly plotted! The king told Haman to make haste. What a hard command! To make haste is a hard task when I have to carry on my journey a broken heart, a disappointed nature, blasted hopes, blighted

prospects; to make haste when in myself I must carry the hideous ruins of that fair castle which I have just been building with so much skill and labour. Make haste to honour the man I have most hated! Love your enemies is the gospel precept. Where is the Christian that makes haste to heap honours on his enemy? Have pity then on wretched Haman if his heart-strings crack and break as he strives to do the king's bidding. Oh! to be emptied of self-seeking, to lie low at the foot of the cross! it will save us from many a hard knock. Stoop low if thou wouldst not be hurt. Think not too much of thyself.

V. The humiliating condition of conceit. The most humiliating condition in which Haman was placed was, not when he hung on the gallows, but when he marched through the streets of the city by the side of Mordecai, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. The righteous one is now exalted, the wicked one is debased. The city may well rejoice. The truth, like Mordecai, may lie long neglected; falsehood, like Haman, may ride in triumph. But the condition must be reversed. Truth will be lifted out of its degradation, clothed in its royal apparel, and even falsehood will be compelled to minister to the honour of the truth and proclaim its glories. Also the time must come when Jesus will ride forth in royal apparel, and his enemies will join in the proclamation—This is the man whom the universe delights to honour. Seek to be the friends of King Jesus now, and then in the day of his glorious appearing we shall not be numbered among those humiliated by his triumph.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 6, 11.

Of all troubles the trouble of a proud heart is the greatest. It was a great trouble to Haman to lead Mordecai's horse, which another man would not have thought so; the moving of a straw is troublesome to proud flesh. First or last, self-denial and victory over ourselves is absolutely necessary; otherwise faith, which is a grace that requireth self-denial, will never be brought into the soul and bear rule there.—*Sibbes.*

Self-conceit, obstinacy, and selfishness are three shameful and harmful evils that have plunged many into ruin. Worldly persons seek their highest good in external pomp and appearance. Self-love appropriates all things to itself, and concedes nothing to its neighbour. Men seek perishable honour; would that they strove diligently after the imperishable honour and glory of heaven! The manner of wicked advisers is, when the haughty fare too well, to goad them on to vindictiveness; but if something unforeseen checks them they drive them to despair. God is the same always; He can bring it about that neither earth nor hell can prevail against us. The wicked are nearest destruction when they deem themselves farthest from it.—*Starke.*

Ambition (as they say of the crocodile) groweth as long as it liveth; and self-love, like to a good stomach, draws to itself what nourishment it liketh, and casts off that which offends it. It maketh men unreasonable, and teacheth them to turn the glass to see themselves bigger, others lesser, than they are. Herodotus reporteth, that after the Greeks had got the better of Xerxes and his Persians, and came together to divide the spoil, when it was put to the question who of all the commanders had deserved the best reward, none would yield to other, but every man thought himself best deserving and second to none. In the battle of Belgrade, where Mahomet, the great Turk, was beaten and driven out of the field, Capistranus and Huniades were the chieftains there, and whereas both of them wrote the relation of that day's work, neither of them so much as once mentioned the other, but each one took the whole praise of it to himself. Haman, though altogether unworthy of the least respect, yet holds himself best worthy of the

greatest honours, and therefore will be sure to be no niggard in advising those ceremonies of honour which he presumes meant to his own person.—*Trapp.*

Ambition may rear turrets in emulation of heaven, and vainglory build castles in the air, but they should have no roof, as the latter should have no foundation. Philip threatened the Lacedemonians, that as he entered their country he would utterly extinguish them. They wrote him no other answer but si (if); meaning, it was a condition well put in, for he was never like to come there.—*Adams.*

Four distinct services did Haman render Mordecai. First, he was his hair-dresser, for he shaved and anointed him; secondly, he was his valet, for he attended him in the bath; thirdly, he was his footman, for he led the horse Mordecai rode; fourthly, he was his trumpeter, for he proclaimed before him: Thus shall be done to the man whom the king desireth to honour.—*Talmud.*

To thyself be it, Haman! Albeit what may please thyself may hardly be so agreeable to another. Pity for the most noble prince"—and Haman may have had some one in view whom he wished to have laid at his feet—who should be appointed to execute what thou shouldst prescribe as the king's commandment! There was no honour and distinction high enough for himself, and no service too menial which he would not have done to him by another. "The royal apparel," by which was meant the gorgeous outward garment of the king, which, according to Persian law, it was a capital crime to wear without his consent—the horse which the king was accustomed to "ride upon," well known both by its excellency and its peculiar trappings and ornaments,—"the crown royal," probably such a lofty tiara as an Oriental writer has described, "entirely composed of thickly set diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, so exquisitely disposed as to form a mixture of the most beautiful colours in the brilliant light reflected from its surface,"—were to be brought, and "one of the king's most noble princes" was to act the part of his servant, arraying him in his robe, setting the crown upon his head, and when he was mounted, to go—reins in hand — through the city proclaiming before him—"Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

The intense vanity and parade of Haman's advice to the king may move our contempt, but we must remember that he was choosing for *himself*. There are many others who, if they were only to put their wishes into words, would ask for things quite as foolish and absurd. In every case they would reveal the ruling passion of their hearts, and if it proved to be worldly or sensual, what was desired in large measure would only, if granted, mature it and injure the receiver. Sometimes there are secret murmurings that God does not leave every man to choose his own portion, but if we only knew our own dispositions better, and the evil principles within us which require to be checked and overcome, we should have much greater reason for gratitude that God retains our earthly portion in his own care and allotment. Especially when we take into account our discipline and preparation for eternity, would we be the very worst to advise regarding what would be best for us. A Haman would choose what would minister to his pride, a Demas to his worldliness, another and another to even baser lusts, and the soul would be left, like a temple in ruins, more and more desolate, and infested, in an ever-increasing degree, with what was vile and loathsome. For the sake of our present peace and future hope, we should rejoice rather in the choice of God—"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

When a scheming self-seeking worldling is brought to poverty and punishment, sympathy for him is apt to spring up in some breasts. They put the man in the foreground, and by his miserable plight are moved to commiseration and pity. But what of those whom it was in his heart to have ruined? The widows and children whose gains he would have

greedily grasped and used for his own selfish ends? The bed which he would make for others is surely good enough for him to lie upon. Simply to change places with his intended victims is a merciful dealing in providence, in so far as it is calculated to convince of personal wrong-doing, and to bring to repentance if the man has not placed himself beyond it. Haman had this justice meted out to him. He would have demeaned one of "the king's most noble princes," by making him his valet and public proclaimer of his own praise through the streets of Shushan. His selfishness blinded him to the suffering and mortification which the procedure would inflict upon another. But ah! what a revulsion of feeling must he have experienced when he was commanded by the king to change places with that other; to become himself the menial slave, putting on him the royal robe and crown; and whilst he rides on the king's horse, compelled himself to walk at its head and sound the other's praise. The greatest grief was that the man who was declared worthy to take the place which he had pourtrayed for himself was "Mordecai the Jew,"—the man who had refused him homage at the king's gate was to receive homage from himself in the public thoroughfares; and the same for whom he had provided a gallows was to have a crown put upon his head by his own hands. It was pitiful. And as we now see him executing the king's order, which he knew it would be in vain to oppose, commiseration and pity for him are liable to bias our judgment. How downcast and forlorn he must have looked. How the words of the proclamation must have gulped in his throat. How he must have hung down his head and averted the astonished looks of the people. Still, he had only changed places with "the most noble prince," whom he would have callously subjected to the same ordeal. For selfishness to reap what it had sown for another is not by any means an unequal punishment. It may be severe, but not more so than this intense selfishness would have accounted nothing if prescribed for an equal. Oh, no, we cannot even compassionate thee, Haman! If it had been thyself who had been robed and crowned, and royally conducted through the streets riding on the king's horse, thou wouldest have made sure that Mordecai had been hanged on the gallows, and one of "the king's most noble princes" would have been degraded to minister to thy pride and selfishness. —*McEwan.*

This is a great infelicity which attends worldly pursuits, that there is no proportion between the pleasure of success and the pain of disappointment. How unsatisfactory to Haman would the wearing of royal ornaments for a small part of a day have been, and all the other honours which he expected to enjoy only for a few moments! We can scarcely suppose that the pleasure of this feast to his vanity would have lasted longer than a night, or a week. But how dreadful a stroke was given to him, by hearing that the man whom he mortally hated was the man whom the king delighted to honour; that he was to be invested with that royal pomp to which Haman himself looked, as the perfection of felicity, and that he must become the servant of that man for whom he had erected a gallows fifty cubits high What exquisite misery, if he had lived to endure it, must have been his portion, at the galling remembrance of his own disgrace, when the erection of that lofty gibbet published to the whole city the height of his hopes and the bitterness of his disappointment!

"Let nothing fail," said the king, "of all that thou hast spoken."—He counted no honours too great for his benefactor He would compensate by his liberality the time which Mordecai had lived unrewarded and unhonoured. If we have neglected to do good when we should have done it, let us use double diligence in doing it, at least whilst time is still left us to repair our omissions.

Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour Do you complain that you must deny yourselves, and take up your cross in

following Christ? But who is the man that is exempted from trouble, or the man that does not find it necessary to deny himself on many occasions? And is it not better to deny ourselves for Christ than to deny ourselves for the sake of any earthly object? You see that Haman, great as he was in the court of Ahasuerus, must serve Mordecai as his lacquey, and perform to him those services which to Haman himself appeared the most glorious of all others, when he would have given thousands of gold and silver for a warrant to slay him. The greatest earthly princes must often do things displeasing, or omit things pleasing, to themselves for temporary advantage, or even without the prospect of advantage. What could Haman gain from Mordecai, or from Ahasuerus, for doing what he could not do without the most extreme reluctance? But the least instance of self-denial for the sake of Christ shall be attended with a great reward, worthy of the bounty of the Giver.

Mordecai was too wise to value those childish honours which appeared so glorious to Haman. He was, undoubtedly, struck with amazement when Haman brought to him the royal robes and the royal horse. But it was necessary for him to yield obedience to the king's pleasure; and doubtless he saw the gracious hand of God in what was done to him. Mordecai had more sagacity than the friends of Haman, who saw the fall of Haman before Mordecai the Jew, presaged by this instance of his humiliation. Jacob saw the love of God in the face of his reconciled enemy. Mordecai saw the favour of God in the reluctant services performed by an enemy as full of malice as ever, and was cheered by the dawnings of that deliverance to his nation for which he had been praying and looking.—*Lawson.*

As I have said in a former lecture, I am reluctant to offer any conjecture of my own on a subject on which so many learned men have bestowed their labour; but it does seem to me that this proposal of Haman's has a meaning which has not been commonly observed. Acquainted as he was with the dangerous and slippery tenure of a favourite in an Eastern court, what possible object could he have in wishing to be allowed, for one brief hour, to act the king, arrayed in his master's robes of state, with the crown of Persia on his head, and paraded through the streets of the city upon the royal horse? And this strange fancy becomes stranger still when we remember that these honours were accounted so divine and sacred by the Persians, that to assume an imitation of any one of them, without the king's express command, would have been an offence to be expiated by instant death.

The true explanation of Haman's proposal appears to me to be this: that he really was aspiring to the sovereignty of Persia, and was meditating an attempt on his master's throne His wealth was incalculable, and his power was already all but boundless and supreme. All, it appears, that was wanting to his happiness was, that he should be decked in the external badges and symbols of royalty:—a very unlikely wish for any man to entertain who did not aspire to royalty itself. In those countries the steps from a throne to a dungeon were often but few, and the transfer of the crown from the prince to one of his nobles or favourites was sometimes but the work of a few hours. Nor is it at all improbable, that the incredible presumption and conceit of this vainglorious man may so far have misconstrued the extraordinary favours which Esther was now showering upon him, as to lead him to imagine that the queen herself would not regret the change. Self admirers are generally self-deceivers. If these suppositions are just they will throw considerable light both on Haman's answer and on what soon after followed.

But, whatever were his motives, it is almost impossible to conceive the horror and amazement he must have felt at the king's reply. If the ground had opened under his feet he could scarcely have been more dismayed than when the clear and awful tones of that voice, which few ever heard without trembling, issued from the sanctuary in which the great king sat enshrined, and the wretched man listened to those memorable words

which rung out the knell of his ambition. "Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." "Mordecai the Jew"—"That sitteth at the king's gate"—"As thou hast said."—It was agony. It was madness. Every syllable left a poisoned arrow rankling in his heart. But he heard and obeyed without a murmur: wonderful illustration of the self-command which a man of such passions could assume, as well as of the abject submission by which he had won the favour of his master.

But who can form any conception of the tortures Haman must have endured while executing such an order? With what bitter reproaches must he have loaded himself for having given such advice, without first taking the precaution to ask the name of the person whom the king designed to honour. Never was folly more fitly punished. That he, Haman, should be obliged to single out, from among the crowd of wondering courtiers, the object of his loathing and abhorrence for this unparalleled honour and distinction; that, publicly, and before the eyes of so many who, he well knew, would exult over his humiliation, he should be compelled, with his own hands, to adorn the detested Jew in all the glories of that royal splendour which he coveted for himself; that he should be forced to wait as a lacquey at his horse's rein, and amid the sneers of multitudes, who were perfectly aware how much he hated Mordecai, and with what scorn Mordecai had defied him, to proclaim with his own lips that this was the man whom the king delighted to honour; and as he walked along, while thousands bowed down and prostrated themselves—not to him, but to Mordecai—to know that he himself was the contriver, and adviser, and doer of the whole of this odious pageant,—this was a punishment so exquisite, so just, so utterly beyond the power of man to have concocted, that it was scarcely possible for any one to avoid seeing in it the hand of Providence and the forewarning of a coming fate.—*Crosthwaite.*

There is an increscent power in evil (as indeed there is also in good), in view of which we cannot be too watchful and anxious, lest by any means we should fall under the power of it. The power of it, remember, is very silent and gentle generally in its operations. The use of strong metaphors to signify the growth of evil is apt to mislead and deceive us, and the contemplation of very strong human instances like this of Haman is apt enough to have the same effect. The growth of evil—Do not figure it by the waters of Niagara hurrying down the rapids and plunging over the brink in ocean fulness. Take rather a plant or slender tree in your garden, which has just begun to grow: there it stands in the morning sunlight; there it stands in the evening dew. It never travels, never plunges, never roars. *It is growing*—and that is enough. So do not look at Haman reeling on the giddy eminence he is trying to scale, and falling thence, as Satan did from heaven. But look at a man growing up in perfect quietness, who has no care to grow up in real goodness, no fear of growing up in evil—and there you have the picture which would be to us, if we could see things as they are, as alarming as any other. Anything may come out of that—Haman, Ahitophel, Judas Iscariot.

Here is the strength, and here is the fitness of the Gospel, and here its inestimable preciousness—that it goes to the root of all evil in man. It is a regeneration, a renewing, a quickening, a redemption; when it comes in power it is death to the principle of evil within—considered as the reigning power of the life. "We are crucified with Christ;" and with Christ we attain to "the resurrection of the dead." O happy change that puts us for ever on the winning side, that gives us the pledge and assurance of eternal victory by the attainment of eternal goodness. Is it wonderful that we should exhort sinful men to flee to him, and to trust him to the uttermost? In him we are in the undecaying strength—in the perfect purity—in the infinite love—and therefore in the eter al blessedness.—*Dr. Raleigh.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 12—14.

A SMALL MAN IN ADVERSITY.

MEN are to be judged so as to form an estimate of their greatness or their littleness, not by their surroundings, but by the manner in which they conduct themselves in the trying changes, in the ups and downs, of life. We must consider their conduct. "By their fruits shall ye know them." Does a man carry himself with calmness in prosperity and with fortitude in adversity, then we may pronounce him great. Is a man unduly elated by prosperity and broken-hearted by adversity, then we pronounce him a small man. Tried thus the despised Mordecai is the truly great man, and the haughty Haman is the little man. In one sense we are the creatures of circumstances. We cannot help being more or less affected by them. In another sense we ought to be the masters of circumstances. They must not be permitted to unman our natures. In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider. Adversity so acts upon some people that all power of consideration is removed. Oh, to be masters of ourselves! This can only be done by the help of Divine grace. "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

I. **A great man in prosperity.** Are there no great men that meet with no prosperity, as the world accounts prosperity? Has God no hidden heroes in quiet walks? We may believe that he has. Up to this time Mordecai had been a great man in obscurity. Really Mordecai was no greater when riding on the king's horse in triumphal procession through the city than when sitting at the king's gate. We are slow to learn and believe the truth, that not circumstances, but character makes a man great. Mordecai's mind was so great that he rose above the state of things and men. He dwelt in a higher sphere than that formed by the pomp of circumstances, by the parade of royalty. We can imagine Mordecai with calm majesty riding through the city Susa. He took the thing naturally; he penetrated to the heart of things. When the little show was over he went calmly to his obscure place at the city gate. In some degree he is a type of him who rode forth amid the hosannas of the multitude, and then listened, as one not astonished, to the cry, Crucify him, crucify him. A great soul had Mordecai. He had food to eat of which Haman had no conception. Seek high conceptions of duty. Sit at thy post, even at the city gate, and wait only for the opening of heaven's gate.

II. **A small man in adversity.** Oh, when adversity really comes are we not all small men? The Bechuanas sit and talk as if they felt nothing when undergoing a painful surgical operation. But most men wince beneath the sharp knife of adversity. Most are but bruised reeds when the blasts of sorrow blow keenly and sharply, and they give forth dismal wailings. Therefore we must temper our judgment with much mercy as we consider Haman in adversity. "Our grief is but our grandeur in disguise;" but our grief also tells of our littleness. Most are brothers to Haman in the time of their adversity. The dreaded blow of trouble sends them to their houses mourning. Adversity makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows. How many despise the guilty Haman, and yet are by trouble reduced to his miserable level. Haman was a small man. He was fretting like a little child because the coveted toy had been grasped out of his hand. For we do not suppose that Haman as yet knew that this honour rendered to Mordecai was but the beginning of his own awful end. So far Haman's troubles were in great measure of an ideal character. A great many of our troubles are of this character. But ideal troubles cause us real misery. If we could only act out the lesson, man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long, we should not have many troubles. Small are most men in the nature of their desires and their disappoint-

ments. They strive and fight for childish toys, and when they get them they are not satisfied, and ask for more. When these toys are wrested from them they haste to their houses mourning, and have their heads covered for grief.

III. A small man in adversity seeks for counsellors. He went to his wife and his friends. Where should a man go in the time of trouble if not to his wife and his friends? A good wife should be a help-meet. Like the ivy plant, she should cling the faster the greater the ruin, and be a helping support and a graceful ornament even to that ruin. Where can a man in sorrow go if not to his friends? where Haman little thought of going. Friends are not always glad to see humiliated Hamans. Even the wife may turn round upon the husband and say, Curse God and die. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

IV. A man in adversity obtains poor consolation. One thing is certain, Haman's wife and his friends told him the truth now, but they had not told him the truth *before*. They had not warned him of his danger, nor showed him the way out of his difficulty. Even now they have nothing in the way of really helpful advice to offer. They simply predict his further downfall. Friends too often have the fatal capacity of plunging a drowning man deeper into the water. Very sad sometimes is the errand on which the man goes when he consults his friends as to the best thing to be done in his trial. He comes back a sadder, but not always a wiser, man from the visit. They glibly show him his faults; they tell him where he has made a slip; they too often appear as if they were taking pleasure in making him look contemptible. We compassionate Haman from the bottom of our hearts. He has sown the wind, and is now reaping the whirlwind. He is now deserted by all, left to his own bitter fate. Heaven's consolations even then might have been obtained. Rich are the consolations that Jesus brings. He never upbraids on account of our faults. If he does not deliver us from our distresses, he gives us strength that we may bear them manfully.

V. A man in adversity receives an ominous summons. And while they were yet talking with him came the king's chamberlains. Trouble upon trouble; but Haman did not understand the worst. He did not foresee the future. He little dreamt that Esther's banquet was but the way to the gallows. We sometimes say, If I had only known! Well, we all know, or might know, that wrong-doing will lead to trouble, and yet we go on doing wrong things. Had Haman known, perhaps, like too many, he would simply have done another wrong thing to prevent the mischief likely to come from past wrong-doing. No need for prophetic sight. We know that sin worketh death; let us then forsake all evil. From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 12—14.

In prosperity he is highly insolent and cruel, but in adversity he is so broken and dejected that he knows not which way to turn. But his counsellors are no better off than himself. His friends do not console him, nor show him any plan for escaping his danger, which nevertheless was then the most needful help for Haman; but they throw him, just hesitating between hope and fear, into despair. "Thou wilt surely fall in his sight," say they. Had they admonished him indeed of his many and heinous sins toward God and his servants, of his duty of recognizing the inevitable judgment of God, of repentance, of reconciliation, then perchance it may have turned out better with him. The power and efficacy of truth is so great that even its enemies and all the ungodly bear testimony to it. So the magicians of Pharaoh are compelled to explain, This is the finger of God; and the Egyptians' cry, Let us flee before Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them.—*Feuardent.*

Men find no difference in themselves. The face of a Jew looks so like other men's that Esther and Mordecai were not, for long, taken for what they were. He that made them makes the distinction betwixt them: so as a Jew may fall before a Persian and get up and prevail; but if a Persian, or whosoever of the Gentiles, begin to fall before a Jew he can neither stay nor rise. There is an invisible hand of omnipotency that strikes in from his own and confounds their opposites. O God, neither is thy hand shortened, nor thy bowels straitened in thee: thou art still and ever thyself. If we be thy true spiritual Israel, neither earth nor hell shall prevail against us; we shall either stand sure or surely rise, while our enemies shall lick the dust.—*Bishop Hall.*

The chief reason why the enemies of the Church gnash their teeth at the sight of God's gracious dealings is, that they take the rising of the Church to be a presage of their ruin: a lesson which Haman's wife had learned.

Haman's wife had learned this, that if her husband began once to fall before the Jews he should surely fall. Wicked men have an hour, and they will be sure to take it; and God hath his hour too, and will be as sure to take that. The judgments of the wicked are mercies to the Church. So saith David, "He slew mighty kings, Og, king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever."—*Sibbes.*

In the narrative which follows we have an example of that decency and propriety with respect to circumstances which is always observed in Scripture, and which may be traced in what is omitted as well as what is introduced. Nothing is said of what passed between Mordecai and Haman, either at the beginning or close of the ceremony. The inspired writer gives us no account of the acclamations of the multitude whom the spectacle drew together. They would no doubt act, poor souls, as they are always accustomed to do, hail the favourite of the day, and echo back the voice of the herald. Let them alone—they would have done the same for Haman. We are even left to conjecture what were the thoughts of the judicious few, both Jews and natives, who might be led by this strange event to augur the approaching fall of the arrogant prime minister, and the rising fortunes of the object of his hatred. The sacred narrative passes over these things, and hastens to the crisis.

The pageant is now over, and we see, issuing from the dispersing crowd, the two principal persons, moving in different directions, and in opposite moods of mind.

Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. There is a double portrait drawn with one stroke, but it is by the hand of a master! We see the hearts of the two men depicted in their looks and gait;—the composure and humility of the one, and the confusion and bitter mortification of the other. These two lines give us a deeper insight into the characters of the men than a would-be painter could have conveyed by the most elaborate representation.

Mordecai came again to the king's gate. He did not remain to prolong his triumph, and to drink in the incense offered by the crowd. He did not go to his own house, and gather together his friends and countrymen to tell them of his high honours, and to receive their congratulations. He did not hurry back to the palace in expectation of receiving some more substantial mark of the royal favour. He did not seek an audience of the king to bring an accusation against his mortal enemy. But he came again to the king's gate from which he had been taken, and resumed his former place as a servant. He was not elated—he was not even discomposed by his honours. "*He stood not up, nor moved,*" for all that Haman had done to him.

"If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee" (saith the wise man), "leave not thy place." But it is still more difficult to keep our place when we are visited with the favour of the ruler. Few can bear honours and dignities with equanimity, even when they come upon them gradually; but such sudden and high advancement was enough to make any ordinary person

giddy, to cause him to forget himself, and behave unseemly. What fatal effects upon the head and heart do we often witness in persons who have all at once been raised from poverty to riches and rank. Even good men are not always proof against the intoxicating influence of such transitions. How incoherently did the disciples talk on the Mount of Transfiguration! That vessel needs to be well ballasted, which, after being long becalmed, has all its sails at once filled with a favourable gust of wind.

But Mordecai kept his place; like a gallant ship, firmly moored in a bay, which during a flood-tide heaves, and seems for a time borne along with the lighter craft, but, obeying its anchor, comes round and resumes its former position. The pageantry of an hour could not unsettle his mind; he regarded it in its true light—a vain show. Had he had a choice, he would have declined it; as it was, he suffered rather than enjoyed it. It may be difficult to determine which of the two felt most awkward and constrained—Haman in conferring or Mordecai in receiving the extravagant honours. Not that the latter was insensible or a stranger to feeling on the occasion. But then he viewed it, not as a prelude to his own aggrandizement, but as an earnest of the deliverance of his people; and as his confidence of this event rested on surer grounds than his own advancement or the influence of his daughter, his heart was filled with astonishment and with gratitude at the prospect; he possessed his soul in patience—he stood still, and waited for the salvation of God.

But let us now turn to Haman. He had not confidence to return to the palace to present the request for which he had visited it in the morning. Nor could he endure the sight of the people, before whom he felt himself dishonoured. But he "*hasted to his house mourning, and with his head covered.*" Had Haman been a man of virtue and true dignity of mind, this occurrence could not have disturbed his peace, far less broken his heart. "Why? what harm has it done to me? I have been selected as '*one of the king's most noble princes,*' to do this temporary honour to a man who saved the royal life." At most he would have regarded it as one of those freaks which fortune delights to play in arbitrary courts, and which break the dull monotony of a palace. He would have said, "I have seen servants riding upon horses, and princes, like servants, walking on the earth." But the man who could complain that all his wealth and honours "availed him nothing, so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate," could not fail to be stung to the quick by the recent transaction. Hatred, and disappointment, and mortified pride, rankled in his breast, and, to torment him still more, awakened remorse for the past, and fearful forebodings of the future. Surely such a sight is sufficient to cure those who have been smitten with pride or with envy at worldly greatness.—*McCrie.*

Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. Who were these wise men? Either sages whom Haman patronized, and from whom he expected wise counsel when he required it, or diviners, who were believed to know more than men could know, without some communication with superior beings. Many of the heathens put much confidence in diviners, but we have learned better things from the word of God. By making it our counsellor at all times of perplexity we shall find peace to our souls.*

"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall."—If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews. Why do they lay so much stress upon the stock from which Mordecai sprung? If Mordecai had been a native Persian, or a Babylonian, or an Egyptian, would they not have prognosticated equal success to him against Haman? No; it plainly appears that the dispensations of Divine

* Isa. viii. 19, 20; Psal. cxix. 24.

Providence in favour of the Jews were so far known to them as to assure them that Providence watched over their interests in a manner peculiar to their nation. Although most men are disposed to think that their own country is happy above others in the Divine favour, and although the Persians at this time seemed to have good reason to flatter themselves with a special interest in the favour of Heaven, yet these wise Persians plainly confessed, that the Jews scattered through the nations were the special objects of the Divine care. The wonders done in Babylon were known to all the world, and could not fail to impress all confederate princes with high sentiments concerning the God of Israel. Haman's wise men might have read the sacred books of the Jews, in which they would find that their God had wrought as great wonders for them in times past as in the period of the Babylonian captivity. They learned instruction from the works of God. They saw that the same God who had preserved Daniel and his companions watched over the safety and fortune of Mordecai, and they concluded that Haman, his irreconcileable enemy, would fall under the weight of his vengeance.

But it is strange that these wise men, and even the wife of Haman, whatever they thought, expressed to him their mind so fully. If they did not choose to flatter him, might they not at least have concealed their dismal conjectures, especially as he was led by their counsels to that public disgrace in which he had involved himself, by building a gallows for the man who was appointed to be the king's favourite? for although it was built in the court of his own house, yet the news of its erection was soon to spread. It appears from the freedom they used with Haman, that they already considered him as a lost man, whom it was useless to flatter. They were his friends, as long as his friendship could profit them, and now they seem to have cared little whether he accounted them as his friends or his enemies. Their prophecy must have been as unpleasant as the howling of a dog, or even a sentence of death, to his ears. The rich hath many friends; but when poverty is seen coming like an armed man, they vanish away like snow in the days of sunshine.

We may, however, learn useful instruction from a prophecy dictated by reflection on the works of the Lord. Blind heathens have been forced to see that God takes care of his people, that he often interposes wonderfully for their deliverance, and that he leaves not his gracious works in their behalf unfinished. Why do not God's own people, in the day of their distress, call to remembrance his judgments for their consolation and the support of their faith? When he begins to deliver them, why do they indulge distrusting fears about the accomplishment of that work which he hath taken into his own hand? Why are they not thankful for the day of small things, as the beginnings of months of joy? After Jesus undertook to heal the daughter of Jairus strong temptations met the mourning parent, when Jesus was on the road to complete his work, and fears began to overwhelm his soul. But what said Jesus? "Fear not, only believe." He believed, and received his daughter back from death. —*Lawson.*

Still, although we may despise the wife and the friends, we cannot say that by their counsel now they do Haman any injustice. They do *not* render him the highest service. The highest service would be to tell him the truth, and help him to conform to it by confession, repentance, and amendment. (If they had been even worldly wise they would have told him at once to take down the gallows.) But they do him no injustice. The poor man (for now pity begins to rise) has been sowing diligently, and he is now to reap *as* he has sown. Black harvest comes in a day. It begins to come in his own house. There—where he had plotted the mischief, begins to fall the shadow of doom.

Yet, let us not overdraw the picture; possibly, if we knew all, there are softer lines to put into it, and some lights of human kindness. There is always much untold and unknown in these histories. Did they follow up their confident pre-

diction that he could not succeed against Mordecai and the Jews, by earnest friendly counsel to Haman to conceal himself, or at once to take flight out of the empire, or away to some distant part of it? We know not. We know only that they were still talking with him—talking over the whole matter—the gathering dangers, the possible methods of relief—when the conference is interrupted by the entrance of the king's chamberlains, who have come, in haste, to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had again prepared.—*Dr. Raleigh.*

When Haman's wife heard her husband say that Mordecai was against him, because he was an Israelite, she said that her husband should take the foil, and Mordecai should prevail. What if she had heard her husband say that the Lord of Mordecai was against him? If the servant be so terrible, who dare encounter with his master?—*H. Smith's Sermons.*

And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. Was there ever a nobler man than this? You will find ten Christians who bear well the trial of adversity for one who can bear well the sharper trial of prosperity. Mordecai, returned to his place, was wearing fairer robes than the king's—that vesture of humility wherein the Son of God walked on earth, and which he has ordained as the livery of his redeemed. Go tell him that he has now a splendid opportunity to rise in the world, that his foot is on the ladder, and he needs but to climb; and he will tell of another ladder he is climbing, with angels for his helpers, and that the show this morning had almost cast him down. His duty is at the king's gate, and there he will wait upon God to show him the end of this strange thing.

"The dew that never wets the flinty mountain
Falls on the valley free;
Bright verdure fringes the small desert fountain,
But barren sand the sea.
The white-robed saints the throne-steps singing under,
Their state all meekly wear,
Their pauseless praise wells up from hearts that wonder
That ever they came there."

But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered. The change was swift and ominous since morning, when he had seen to the gallows being ready, and gone forth hopeful. Not a man in all the city knew that two hours hence others would cover his face and lead him out to death; but Haman felt that God was fighting against him, and anticipated his doom. Is it wrong to mock him now? Why not report yourself to the king as having done his bidding, and ask what you purposed to ask this morning? On the showing of your own words, the king has treated you as "one of his most noble princes." Zeresh and your friends are expecting you to bring back your victim with you for the gallows. Why so downcast? But, despicable as Haman is, pity is fitter for us than scorn—pity, with a prayer for ourselves that we may escape the fatal madness of making self our god. Haman's friends had helped him last night, and roused him to hope; but they failed him now. These were summer friends, and thought it not worth while even to lie to him any longer. Besides, they were superstitious. "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews." Why this emphasis on Mordecai's race? The case would not have been so bad if he had been an Ethiopian; but there were strange features about these Jews. They sometimes stood out on ground of high principle, and when they did so they prospered against all probability. The friends of Haman were Amalekites, in all likelihood, and familiar, therefore, with a history of warning. "Before whom thou hast begun to fall." His friends see no hope for Haman now that he is started on the swift incline of ruin. When great men of this sort begin to go down their course is quick in proportion to their greatness; and it is a serious aggravation of their misery that the friends of their prosperity hasten their unpitied fall. The tempters, in this world or the next, prove the tormentors.—*Symington.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. *Safe sleeping.* When one asked Alexander how he could sleep so soundly and securely in the midst of danger, he told him that Parmenio watched; he might well sleep when Parmenio watched. Oh how securely may they sleep over whom he watches that never slumbers nor sleeps! "I will," said David, "lay me down and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety."—*Venning.*

A sleepless night. "Because God wouldn't let him," was the answer given by a little boy in one of our Sunday Schools of a large city in the West of England to a question asked by the teacher in reference to the Persian monarch not being able to enjoy his accustomed slumbers. It was a simple but sound reply, for God's providence was watching over his ancient people, and when they appeared to be in imminent danger of falling by the hand or the sword he again proved faithful to his promises, and made transpiring events and circumstances subservient to his purpose. On that night the king could not sleep because

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will."
>
> *Biblical Museum.*

A sleepless night. A few years ago, a pious man at Gravesend had retired to rest late on the Saturday night, having first secured the doors and windows of his house and shop. Weary, however, as he was with the labours of the week, he found it impossible to sleep; and, having tossed about in his bed for an hour or two without rest, he resolved to rise and spend an hour in the perusal of his Bible, as preparatory to the engagements of the Sabbath. He went downstairs with the Bible under his arm, and advancing towards one of the outer doors, he found several men who had broken into the house, and who but for this singular interruption would probably, in a very short period, have deprived him of the whole of his property. —*R. T. S. Anec. quoted in Biblical Museum.*

Providence of God in withholding sleep.—The late Sir Evan Nepean, when Under-Secretary of State, related to a friend of his that one night he had the most unaccountable wakefulness that could be imagined. He was in perfect health, had dined early and moderately, had no care—nothing to brood over—and was perfectly self-possessed. Still he could not sleep, and from eleven till two in the morning had never closed an eye. It was summer, and twilight had far advanced; and to dissipate the *ennui* of his wakefulness, he resolved to rise and breathe the morning air in the park. There he saw nothing but sleepy sentinels, whom he rather envied. He passed the Home Office several times, and at last, without any particular object, resolved to let himself in with his pass key. The book of entries of the day before lay open on the table, and in sheer listlessness he began to read. The first thing appalled him!—"A reprieve to be sent to York for the coiners ordered for execution the next day." It struck him that he had no return to his order to send the reprieve, and he searched the minutes, but could not find it. In alarm, he went to the house of the chief clerk, who lived in Downing Street, knocked him up (it was then long past three), and asked him if he knew anything of the reprieve being sent. In greater alarm, the chief clerk could not remember. "You are scarcely awake," said Sir Evan; "collect yourself: it must have been sent." The chief clerk said he did now recollect he had sent it to the Clerk of the Crown, whose business it was to forward it. "Good!" said Sir Evan; "but have you his receipt and certificate that it is gone?" "No!" "Then come with me to his house. We must find him, though it is so early!" It was now four, and the Clerk of the Crown lived in Chancery Lane. There was no hackney coach, and they almost ran. The Clerk of the Crown had a country house, and meaning to have a long holiday, he was at that moment stepping into his gig, to go to his villa. Astonished at the visit of the Under-Secretary at such an hour, he was still more so at his business. With an exclamation of horror, cried the Clerk of the Crown, "The reprieve is locked up in my desk!" It was brought. Sir Evan sent to the Post Office for the trustiest and fleetest express, and the reprieve reached York at the moment the unhappy people were ascending the cart. Surely this was the finger of God.—*Leisure Hour.*

Ver. 3. Count Zinzendorf owed his religious zeal to the accidental view of a picture of the crucifixion, underneath which was this simple inscription—

"All this for thee, how much for me?"

What honour and dignity hath been done to Jesus? Remember how much he has done for thee, and then ask how much can I do, how much ought I to do, for him?

According to Thieisch Napoleon maintained that a prince who followed his conscience would be a good and noble governor, but not a great man. However, Ahasuerus in this history only appears a truly great man as he manifests some uneasiness and regret on account of his neglect of the great services of Mordecai.

Ver. 5. *Come, a song-bird.* In a lonely cot there sat one night an aged widow, very poor and nearly blind. The Christian lady had been reading from the best of books. "Ah," said the poor widow, "there is one word sweeter than all the rest. It is a song for my darkness. Can you guess what it is?" The visitor thought, and she said presently, "Yes, I think I know; it is Jesus, the name above all other names." "No," said the widow; "Jesus is a blessed word, but that is not enough for me, unless I know him for my Saviour. It is no comfort for me that he died for sinners, unless I know he died for me

"Perhaps you mean heaven," said the visitor, "for he is there." "No," said the widow; "what comfort would it be for me to know that Jesus is in heaven, and others should see his face, and love and serve him there, if I am not bound for heaven. No; it is just one word from his own lips, I call it my little song-bird—come." Jesus says *come* in a far different sense from that in which Ahasuerus said, Let him come in. Ahasuerus said this for his own enlightment. Jesus says "Come unto me" for our enrichment.

Royal presents to an official.—The presentation as a gift from a royal personage of that which had been worn on his own person was a special mark of favour and condescension. Morier, in his narrative of "A Second Journey through Persia," thus illustrates this custom:—"When a treaty between Russia and Persia was concluded, some years since, in the commencement, according to the usual form, the ranks of the two principal persons who were deputed to arrange it had to be specified. The Russian general was found to have more titles than the Persian plenipotentiary, who was therefore at a loss how to make himself appear of equal importance with the other negotiator; but at length, recollecting that, previous to his departure for the place of conference, his sovereign had honoured him by a present of one of his own swords, and of a dagger set with precious stones, to wear which is a peculiar distinction in Persia, and besides had clothed him with one of his own shawl robes, a distinction of still greater value, he therefore designated himself as 'endowed with the special gifts of the monarch, lord of the dagger set in jewels, of the sword adorned with gems, and of the shawl coat already worn.'"

Ver. 12. *Fortitude of the Bechuanas.* They are excellent patients. There is no wincing; everything prescribed is done instanter. Their only failing is that they become tired of a long course. But in any operation even the women sit unmoved. I have been quite astonished again and again at their calmness. In cutting out a tumour, an inch in diameter, they sit and talk as if they felt nothing. "A man like me never cries," they say; "they are children that cry." And it is a fact that the men never cry. They stand in striking contrast to Haman, who hasted to his house mourning for what was an imaginary evil in great measure; yea, they reprove a great many who profess to be sustained by higher motives. It may be a want of sensitiveness on the part of the Bechuanas, but with increased sensitiveness there should be an increased power of self-control. It is wonderful what power of self-control is possessed and manifested by the members of the Society of Friends.—*Dr. Blaikie's Personal Life of David Livingstone, LL.D.*

Satan, a hard task-master. There was a man in the town where I was born who used to steal all his firewood. He would get up on cold nights, and go and take it from his neighbours' wood-piles. A computation was made, and it was ascertained that he had spent more time, and worked harder, to get his fuel than he would have been obliged to do if he had earned it in an honest way, and at ordinary wages. And this thief was a type of thousands of men who work a great deal harder to please the devil than they would have to work to please God.—*Beecher.*

So Haman worked hard to please the devil of an evil nature, and it ended in mourning. He would have found more satisfaction in the long-run if he could have set himself to serve a good nature.

Circumstances. He is happy whose circumstances suit his temper; but he is more excellent who can suit his temper to his circumstances.—*Hume.*

If you can't turn the wind you must turn the mill-sails. Joseph was a beautiful example. See him, in his changed positions, still the upright saint; and Jesus, his conduct at the marriage and in the temple. William Pitt used to be called the minister of existing circumstances. A Christian shepherd, when a gentleman said, to try him, "Suppose your master were to change, or your flock to die; what then?" replied, "Sir, I look upon it that I do not depend upon circumstances, but upon the great God that directs them." The Rev. H. W. Fox, when dying, had constantly upon his lips the words of Baxter:—"Lord, *when* thou wilt, *where* thou wilt; *as* thou wilt." Mordecai, riding in the procession, and then returning to sit at the gate, shows his superiority to mere externals.—*Bowes.*

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICAL NOTES.] **2. The king said again**] Compare ch. v. 6. **3. My life, . . . my people**] Esther has had time to carefully prepare her words, and her earnest language rises to the emotionality of poetic parallelisms. We may throw her address into the following form :—

If I have found favour in thine eyes, O king,
And if to the king it seem good,
Let my life be given me at my petition,
And my people at my request.
For we are sold, I and my people,
To be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish.
If, now, for slaves and for bondwomen we were sold, I had been silent,
For the enemy is not to be compared with the injury to the king.

4. We are sold] Allusion to Haman's offer to pay into the king's treasury ten thousand talents. **Destroyed, . . . slain, . . . perish**] She quotes the very words of the fearful edict, and thus gives a most telling point and emphasis to her plea. **Although the enemy**] This sentence is obscure, and perhaps Esther meant that it should be ambiguous. The common version conveys the meaning that if the Jews were all sold into slavery, their enemy, who brought this woe upon them, could not, by any payment into the king's treasury, recompense him for the loss he would sustain. But the Hebrew seems to make this last sentence give a reason for Esther's keeping silence ; namely, because she does not consider the enemy worthy of the trouble and injury it must cost the king to punish him, and counteract the decree of death that has gone forth against the Jews. **The enemy**] to whom she contemptuously refers is, of course, Haman. **Countervail**] The Kal participal—meaning, to be equal with ; to be compared with. **Damage**] may be here taken in the sense of injurious trouble, annoyance, vexation.—*Whedon's Com.* Thus Esther says (ver. 4), The enemy has determined upon the total destruction of my people. If he only intended to bring upon them grievous oppression, even the most grievous oppression of slavery, I would have been silent, for the enemy is not worthy that I should vex or annoy the king by my accusation.—*Keil.* **5. Who is he**] Ahasuerus could not really have doubted ; but he affects to doubt, that he may express his anger at the act, apart from all personal considerations. —*Rawlinson.* **Who . . . is he that durst presume**] Lit., as the margin, whose heart has filled him to do this. The evil and ambitious man is filled with foul thoughts and purposes from the corrupt fountain of his own wicked heart. **6.**] Esther replies, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then was Haman afraid before the king and the queen." **7.**] The king went into the palace garden in order to recover from the first burst of anger, and to consider what was to be done with Haman. He stood up and besought Esther to shield him from the king's fury. **8. Haman was fallen upon the bed**] In the wild emotion and alarm of the moment he had thrown himself upon the couch or divan on which Esther reclined at the banquet, and was supplicating for his life. **Will he force the queen**] Of course the king did not believe his own words. But he meant to tax Haman with a further offence in not sufficiently respecting the person of the queen, and he thereby suggested to the attendants his instant execution.—*Rawlinson.* **Covered Haman's face**] The covering of the face was probably the beginning of the execution of the death sentence. (Compare Curtius ; They brought Philetas with covered head into the palace.) Even old interpreters remind us of the sentence in Cicero : Lictor, bind his hands, veil his head, hang him on the hapless tree. However, only mentioned here as a Persian custom. **9. Harbonah . . . said**] This eunuch had been many years in Xerxes' service. **Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai,** &c.] may not imply that the other servants, or even Harbonah himself, had already brought accusations against Haman, and, in addition, would also reproach him with the erection of this gallows ; but, from Harbonah's views, it points out the most appropriate means at hand offered by the prepared gallows for the fate of Haman. This is more significant against Haman. In giving prominence to the fact that Mordecai was the one who spoke well for the king by revealing the plot against the king's life, he intimates that it was more fit for Haman to grace the gallows than the one for whom it was originally erected.—*Lange.* In all the range of literature we find no more signal display of righteous retribut' n than in the death of Haman.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1—4.

A STRANGE BANQUET.

I. The banquet was strange if we consider the incongruous nature of the company. Things are not what they seem, and the three now meeting together at the banquet are not what they might seem to casual observers. They were not happy, could not be happy under the circumstances. Very different feelings now took possession of their natures. Ahasuerus was now stirred up to a sense of his responsibility. Haman must have felt the approach of his doom. The declaration of the wise men and of his wife must have been ringing in his ears. And Esther was roused up to the fact that an important crisis in her own and in her nation's history was now at hand. A deep sense of uneasiness must have pervaded the company which the wine could not allay. Thus, if we could only pierce the outward we should find that the gatherings of this world are not at all in harmony. Sometimes such gatherings end without any startling revelation ; but it was not so in this case. It came to a fatal end for Haman at least. The harmonizing spirit of the gospel of love is the true power by which gatherings may be rendered pleasant and profitable. At the gospel banquet all spirits should harmonize. At the banquet of heaven we may expect complete harmony.

II. The banquet was strange if we consider the unaccustomed constancy of the king. Ahasuerus was evidently a vacillating monarch, to one thing constant never. But now he shows a strange exception. For the third time he asks Queen Esther, "What is thy petition?" The king appears more willing to give than Esther is to ask ; and in this he is a type of God. He is indeed more willing to give than the sons of men are to ask. Yea, he gives before we ask ; gives in spite of our unwillingness to receive, and of our ingratitude. He is giving every day. Let us be more constant and extensive in our askings. Ahasuerus proves his willingness to give by a repetition of his question. In this he is a small type of the great Giver. He repeats and repeats his assurances of his willingness to give. His invitations and his promises to the children of men are plentifully scattered throughout the sacred records. Ahasuerus showed his willingness to give by a large promise. God shows his willingness to give not only by large promises, but by large bestowals. How many are the bestowals of God ! How vast his bounties ! What a proof of willinghood in the gift of his well-beloved Son !

III. The banquet was strange if we consider the peculiar character of Esther's petition. Notice—(*a*) *The graceful modesty of the preface.* "If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king." Could anything be more graceful, more modest, and more artistic ? Such words from such sweet lips must have confirmed Ahasuerus in his determination to help the speaker in her present difficulty. It is evident that Esther was a woman of skill as well as of beauty. Modesty becomes the petitioner. Beauty is often arrogant. But beauty's charms are increased by the presence of modesty. Morally we have no beauty to plead as we come to God in prayer. Modesty is becoming. Yet boldness is permitted because we come to God in the name of Jesus Christ, who always is well beloved. Let us go to God not pleading our deserts, but the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. (*b*) *The natural and the benevolent request.* She pleads for her own life, and that was natural. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Wonderful this intense love of life. Wise arrangement of Divine providence. Through trial, and poverty, and pain, and sickness the human being clings to life. Esther might well ask for life with her propitious surroundings. But Esther pleads for *the life of her people, and that was benevolent.* Most probably Esther might have secured the boon of her own life without

securing the salvation of her people. This, however, would not have satisfied her benevolent nature. Haman was very fearful when his own life was threatened. He was very reckless about the lives of others. Esther was calm when her own life was in danger, and was anxious for the salvation of the lives of her people. A sweet type was she of the Son of man, who came to save the lost. He did not even go so far as to plead for his own life. Yea, he gave his life a ransom for many. He pleads for the life of his people. As Esther's, so the Saviour's intercession was successful, and shall be to the end of time. How noble the office to plead for life! Esther pleaded for physical life; Jesus pleads for intellectual and moral life. Not because God has issued a foolish and wicked decree, not because God is a stern tyrant, a luxurious despot, but because the claims of justice must be met, and the interests of God's moral government must be maintained. Esther asked little for herself. She asked for her life, but that was a prelude to the further request of the life of her people. The granting of one part of the petition was a pledge for granting the rest. Jesus only asks to see the fruits of the travail of his soul. He desires the salvation of men. Ahasuerus would be astonished at the nature of Esther's request. God is not astonished at the nature of the Saviour's request. Not like Ahasuerus, God saw the danger, and provided a remedy. Let us believe that God Almighty willeth not the death of a sinner. (*c*) *The timely confession.* She acknowledges her people. She confesses that she belongs to the persecuted race. The time has come for confession, and she is ready to face the worst. The queen talks of the outcast, despised, and death-decreed race as her people. A period will come when a more wondrous confession than this will be made. Jesus Christ will bring forth his people in the day of final reckoning. Very many poor and despised ones of earth will then be spoken of by Jesus as "My people." Are we now the people of God? Let us not despise any in whom the smallest spark of Divine grace is found. (*d*) *The startling avowal.* "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." There is more harm done through want of thought than through want of heart. The thoughtlessness of Ahasuerus caused this declaration to come upon him in a startling manner. Very many people are still sold to destruction through this very thoughtlessness. And too often Esthers are not found to interpose between the thoughtlessness and its bitter consequences. Let us think about our conduct, and especially as to its bearing upon other people. (*e*) *The gracious considerateness.* "But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage." How little consideration for others some people possess! A little personal inconvenience soon sets their tongues working, and they do not shrink from giving much trouble to those about them. Esther would have held her tongue had it been a small thing she was called upon to endure. She shrank from giving the king needless trouble. Let us learn to keep the door of our lips, not for reasons of worldly policy, but because we do not desire to give trouble that can lead to no beneficial results. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O God, my strength and my Redeemer." Thus shall our words be timely. Thus shall our words be profitable to others. Thus our tongues will be silent even in suffering.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1—4.

Ahasuerus is not more liberal in his offer than firm in his resolutions, as if his first word had been, like his law, unalterable. I am ashamed to miss that steadiness in Christians which I find in a pagan. It was a great word that he had said; yet he eats it not, as over lavishly spoken, but doubles and triples it, with hearty assurances of a real prosecution; while those tongues which profess the name of a true God say and unsay at pleasure, recanting their good

purposes, contradicting their own just engagements, upon no cause but their own changeableness.—*Bishop Hall.*

Trembling soul, if this heathen king is so trustworthy in his promises, then your heavenly King is far more faithful. The former promises only to give the half of his kingdom, but he to give you the whole kingdom. Truth may be crushed to the earth, but it dies not; it can be avoided or offended, yet it will finally come to light and triumph.—*Starke.*

But in all this the first notable thing is how far apart stand the judgments of the Almighty and those of this world, since those whom the world esteems most happy and fortunate are truly most unhappy and unfortunate before God. Men, indeed, seeing only what appears, and judging according to the outward semblance, would have boldly pronounced no man more fortunate than Haman. But in fact, and in God's view, who sees the heart, he was of all men the most miserable. For he was inflated with ambition, he was hot with envy, he was bursting with hate, and went to the banquet in the most disturbed state of mind. There rankled in the bottom of his heart the thought of the fresh honour which he had lately been forced to confer upon his enemy; and he was, moreover, goaded to desperation by what his friends had told him to his face—that he himself, having once begun to fall before the Jew, would for ever be his inferior, and that Mordecai would increase in glory and honour.—*Feuardent.*

"Let me make haste away to my country; there are my excellent ancestors, there dwell my noble relations, there is the constant residence of my dearest friends" (*Plotinus*). "Oh, happy will that day be when I shall come into that glorious assembly, when I shall have better company than Homer, Orpheus, Socrates, Cato; when I shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the palace of their Friend and mine! Oh, happy day, when I shall come to my Father's house, to that general assembly, the Church of the first-born, to an innumerable company of angels, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the spirits of just men made perfect!" (*Tull*). A man's knowledge of other things may add to his fears, and make his miseries greater; but the more knowledge we have of God, the less our fears and sorrows must be; and when our knowledge of God is perfect, all our fears and sorrows shall be for ever blown over. I cannot omit a brave speech of that noble Stoic which comes to my mind: "If the acquaintance and favour of Cæsar can keep you (as you are made to believe) from some fears, how much rather to have God for your Father and Friend? How little cause have such to be afraid at any time of anything! Death itself is not an evil to a friend of God; he may say, Come, let us go quickly to our Father's house; our Father calls us" (*Epict.*).—*Janeway's Quotations.*

The concluding words were calculated to draw his attention to the subject as affecting the interests of his kingdom. The Jews were an industrious race. Dispersed throughout the kingdom of Persia, they had devoted themselves to the pursuits of agriculture and commerce. They were captives, but not properly slaves, having their settlements here and there, for the cultivation of the soil or for merchandise, as their inclination led; and, although foreigners, yet mixed up with the general population of the country, and in the character of quiet, peaceful subjects, contributing toward the general wealth and prosperity. That they were not burdensome for their support, but, as to temporal matters, in a flourishing condition, is very manifest from Haman's offer to pay out of their spoil so large a sum into the royal treasury. To have swept away, then, by a wholesale slaughter, a race so active and industrious as the Jews were, would have been to inflict a heavy blow upon the prosperity of the kingdom. Their spoils might be a present benefit to the royal exchequer, but the loss entailed upon the national wealth would be permanent and irreparable. And the difference would not be great as to the national loss, if they were not to be destroyed, but merely reduced to the state of slavery. If sold as slaves, and carried away into other countries by the slave-merchants of Tyre and Sidon, the price

paid for them would be a poor return for the fruit of their continued industry as the subjects of the Persian king. And if they were made slaves in his own dominions, there would be the loss to his revenue of so much active enterprise on the part of a people who paid all the public taxes, and increased the national resources by the cultivation of the soil and foreign trading. Esther seems to have known better than the king did, and better than some modern politicians have done, or yet do, the secret of the wealth of nations. To annihilate an industrious and peaceful people she represents as an act equally cruel and impolitic. To substitute slave-labour for the labour and vigorous and persevering industry of freemen she speaks of as also most opposed to the real interests of the state. This is the meaning of her words: "If we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage." The sentiment here expressed is far in advance of the age in which Esther lived, and the truth and significance of it have often been illustrated since her time, although only illustrated so as to indicate that its importance was not yet estimated, nor the wisdom of it practically felt. Thus, for example, when persecution against the friends of Protestantism raged fiercely in France and Belgium, and those who preferred the religion of the Bible to Popery had to choose between remaining at home to be massacred, or seeking a refuge abroad, a vast number of the most intelligent and industrious of the population took refuge in England and Scotland, bringing their skill and industry with them to benefit the land of their adoption. History settles it as a fact beyond all question, that these refugees for conscience' sake contributed more largely to the industrial and commercial advancement of this country than it would be easy to calculate. For in those days we were far behind our continental neighbours in the practice of the mechanical and useful arts; and thus the bigotry and cruelty which drove multitudes to seek an asylum in this island, dried up the sources of the wealth of the countries from which they came, while Britain, on the other hand, was rewarded for opening her arms to shelter the oppressed by obtaining all the benefit of their intelligence and labour, as not only skilful artisans, but peaceful and religious citizens.

And then again, with respect to the difference between the exertions and enterprise of freemen for the real advantage of a country, as contrasted with slaves, Esther's judgment was far more correct, for instance, than that of the Americans, who boast so much of their liberty and their political wisdom; and her judgment is corroborated by the sentiments of all intelligent travellers, who have recorded their experience in passing through those States of America where slavery is legalized.* The labour which is exacted by the lash is neither so well performed nor so great in amount as that which is paid for. There is no inducement to the slave to cultivate his intellect. When he sees that he cannot better his condition, he naturally sinks into a state of apathy, or endeavours by craft and cunning to over-reach his taskmasters. And thus, altogether, the just law of Providence comes in to punish the avarice and cruelty of those who trample upon the rights of their fellowmen. For while the strength of a country consists, humanly speaking, in the amount of its industrious population, with a full supply of the means of subsistence—every man being free to employ his mind and his labour in the field which he thinks will be most profitable—the increase of a slave population is a source of positive weakness, as well as a growing cause of insecurity. Apart altogether from the evils and sinfulness of the system of slavery, as opposed to the great law of love which Christ came to enforce and establish, and apart from the danger which results from the preponderance of a class between whom and those above them there cannot be any real good-will and sympathy, slavery is a positive loss to a community in all respects, whether moral or social; and

* Though slavery is abolished in America, Davidson's remarks hold good and may be read with profit.

Esther spoke the truth when she denounced it as calculated to work damage to the king.—*Davidson.*

Vers. 1, 2. *So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again to Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.*

Haman, honoured with the king's society at the banquet of wine, might expect to be consoled for his late disappointment by new expressions of the royal favour. But soon did his hope of any remedy prove like the giving up of the ghost. He was brought to the banquet, not that he might enjoy the queen's smiles, but that he might hear an accusation against himself, which touched his life, and to which he could not answer.

The king persisted in his kind sentiments towards Esther. For the third time, he promises, whatever her petition was, to grant it, even to the half of the kingdom. Who would not have been emboldened by a promise so often given? To have deferred the petition any longer would have but argued an ungrateful distrust of the king's sincerity. Let us remember how much greater encouragement we have to present our requests to God, and what distrust we discover of his faithfulness if we do not come before his throne of grace with boldness. No less than six times, in the compass of one sentence,* does our Lord Jesus assure us that our prayers shall be heard.

* Matt. vii. 7, 8.

Ver. 3. *Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given at my petition, and my people at my request.*

Esther at last ventured to bring forth her request. The nature of the case pressed her. The king's solicitations urged her. His kindness and his promises encouraged her. Unnecessary delays are dangerous, especially in matters of great importance.

The request was for her life, and the life of her people. The king was no less surprised at this petition than Festus was at hearing the accusation of the Jews against Paul. It was certainly not for any such thing as the king supposed. It never came into his mind that his beloved queen could have any occasion to present a petition to him for her life. Although by his own authority (but without his knowledge) a sentence of death had been pronounced against her, it must have astonished him to hear that she and her people were doomed to destruction; and it must astonish the reader of this history that the king, five years after his marriage with the queen, should have passed a sentence of death upon her whole nation without knowing it. Into such absurdities are princes led who are too indolent to look into their own affairs, and leave them to be managed without control by favourites, who have their own interests to serve, and their own passions to gratify.—*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 5, 6.

The Doings of a Wicked Heart.

Ahasuerus was yet in the dark. He had signed the decree for the extermination of the Jews at the instigation of Haman, he had seen Haman's great ambition, he had heard Esther's piteous appeal, but still he is not sharp enough to fix upon Haman as the offender. Perhaps it is that he does know, but waits to have a clear declaration from Esther's own lips, but waits to see the case plainly settled that Haman was the guilty one.

I. A wicked heart induces foolhardiness. There is wisdom apparent in the renderings given by the translators of the Bible. They speak, for the most part, as if inspired by the Holy Ghost. Very suggestive is their rendering of the question uttered by Ahasuerus. "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his

heart to do so?" The daring presumption of those impelled by wicked hearts is indeed appalling. A wicked heart is both deceitful and deceiving. Haman's wicked heart must have deceived him as to the daring nature of the course he had been pursuing. He only thought of gratifying an evil nature, and did not calmly consider the possible and very probable bitter consequences. This is characteristic of wicked hearts through all time. The foolhardiness of the wicked is astonishing. They appear as if bereft of their senses. When we see how clumsily they proceed to work, we ask, How could they hope to escape detection? What induced them to take the fatal step? How is it that they actually permit themselves to be caught in their own toils?

II. A wicked heart, sooner or later, meets with open condemnation. "And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." It may be true that the wicked heart does not always meet with a righteous and indignant Esther come to judgment. Yet it cannot escape either here or hereafter. It will either discover itself or be discovered. The wicked heart will discover itself by its wicked fruits. For a long time it may work in secret, but ultimately all will be revealed. He that doeth evil may avoid the light, but he cannot always escape its detecting rays. There is only one way of escape, but there is one way, and it is all-sufficient. That one way is repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If the light shines upon the wicked heart, and the man sees with holy remorse the evil of his nature, then there may be, and is, a way of escape. If we say the wicked heart must meet with open condemnation, we mean if that wicked heart will not condemn itself, but continues obdurate and impenitent.

III. A wicked heart leads to fearfulness. "Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen." The wicked flee when no man pursueth. If a man has not his sensibilities all deadened, then he must be afraid in the midst of his wickedness All the annals of crime tell us that fearfulness surprises the wicked. They live in constant terrors. Haman, however, had now outward reason for fear. How greatly was he troubled at this crisis! He had fears within. There were fightings against him without. Easy it is for us to say that Haman was a coward. Who would not have been a coward under the trying circumstances? A virtuous soul may be calm and brave in the face of outward terrors; but strange would it be if a vicious soul did not give way to fear. Hardened sinners may pass through the terrors of time with apparently unmoved natures; but in the great day of Divine wrath they will say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 5, 6.

Now Queen Esther musters up her inward forces, and, with an undaunted courage, fixing her angry eyes upon the hated Agagite, she says, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." The word was loath to come forth, but it strikes home at the last. Never till now did Haman hear his true title; before, some had styled him noble, others great, others magnificent, and some, perhaps, virtuous; only Esther gave him his own, "Wicked Haman." Ill-deserving greatness doth in vain promise to itself a perpetuity of applause. If our ways be foul, the time shall come when, after all vain flattery, after all our momentary glory, our sins shall be ripped up, and our iniquities laid before us, to our utter confusion. With what consternation did Haman now stand! How do we think he looked to hear himself thus enstyled, thus accused, yea, thus condemned? Certainly death was in his face, and horror in every one of his joints. No sense, no limb knows his office. Fain would he speak; but his tongue falters, and his lips tremble. Fain would he make apologies upon his knees; but his heart fails him, and tells him the evidence is too great. Only guiltiness and fear look through his eyes upon the enraged countenance

of his master, which now bodes nothing to him but revenge and death.—*Bishop Hall.*

Ver. 5. *Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?*

What! to compass the death of the queen, and, as if that were too small a wickedness, the destruction of all her people also! Was a man so wicked to be found in any of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the king's dominions? If there were such a daring criminal to be found, no death was too terrible for him.

What, then, will our Lord do when he rises up to revenge the wrongs done to himself in the persons of his brethren; of those who are espoused to him in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies? Will he not account the wrongs done to them to have been done to himself? When he maketh inquisition for blood, woe to them that are stained with bloody crimes against his people. The wrath of Ahasuerus against the enemies of the Jews was a fruit of God's wrath against them. He forgot not his promise to Abraham, "I will bless him that blesseth thee, and I will curse him that curseth thee."

"What and where is he that durst do this thing?"—What if Ahasuerus himself is the man, although it would have been unwise in the queen to tell him that he was. He was certainly, though unconscious of it, a partner in this wickedness; and yet he was filled with horror at hearing that any person could dare to load himself with such guilt. Thus David was filled with anger against a man who was only the emblem of himself.* Consider what abhorrence you have of the sins of other men, and consider how like your own sins are to theirs, and let your souls be humbled within you. Take care how you speak of the sins of other men, lest your tongues condemn yourselves. Your sins are probably much liker to theirs than you imagine, till you have well considered the matter. Perhaps they are a great deal worse, when every circumstance is considered.

Ver. 6. *And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.*

Haman now finds for what reason he was invited by the queen to her banquet. It was, to be accused to his face of the blackest crime. He had an opportunity of saying what could be said (if anything could be said) in his own vindication, or in mitigation of his offence. But if he had nothing to say, it was to be expected that the confusion of his face would be a witness against him.

This was actually the case. "Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen." He had too good reason to tremble for his life. The queen had brought a dreadful accusation against him, and his guilt was too apparent to be denied or to be extenuated. It was, besides, of a nature fitted to excite the king's fiercest indignation and bitterest rage.—*Lawson.*

* 2 Sam. xii.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 7, 10.

The Fear, the Folly, and the Doom of the Evil-Doer.

After Ahasuerus had heard Esther's accusation, he went out into the palace garden. Wrath was in his countenance; wrath in his hasty tread. The sweet air of the palace garden, laden with rich odours, did not allay his anger. No soft music was found strong enough to drive away the evil spirit. Angry he went forth, and angry he returned. The offence was of too grave a character to be thus easily forgotten. It is not for us here to conjecture how far Ahasuerus might have gone on the line of forgiveness. Perhaps it was needful for the interests of his government that this bad man (Haman) should be at once brought to judgment. In human codes the boundary line of forgiveness is soon reached. In the Divine

administration there is the exercise of forgiveness on a vast scale. But even there we seem to find a limit. If men reject all the Divinely-appointed means for obtaining pardon, there only remaineth "a certain fearful looking for of judgment." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Men must not trifle with the Divine nature. God is merciful, but God is just. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."

I. The evil-doer receives warning. "Haman saw that there was evil determined against him by the king." At present Haman had not ascertained the extent and the nature of the evil; but he clearly heard the sound of the avenging deity, though his feet might be shod with wool. The wrath on the king's countenance and the guilt in Haman's soul both tended to give him awful warning. Evil-doers receive warning. Nature gives warning. She declares that evil-doing must bring damage sooner or later. She is stern, and will not suffer her great laws to be violated with impunity. Revelation gives warning. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." History gives warning. The warnings too are given long before it is too late. The evil-doer when meeting the doom of his crimes will not be able justly to say, Had I known only in time! had some voice only spoken early enough to arrest me in the career of crime! The voices do speak, but the evil-doer turns a deaf ear. Oh, let us listen to every warning voice; let us be wise in time. Haman now heard the warning voice, but it was almost too late. But it may not yet be too late for us. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

II. The foolish evil-doer works his own destruction. Perhaps anything that Haman could have done at this crisis would not have been efficacious to avert his awful doom. May we not suppose, however, that if Esther had seen the signs of genuine repentance in Haman, and had heard from his lips a sincere confession of his baseness and of his guilt, she would have done something for his pardon? But he did not take this course. He was found by the king in a position that tended to excite still more the king's wrath. The very means that Haman took to save his life was the means of bringing about his speedy execution. All through this history Haman is seen working for his own destruction, though he thought he was working for the destruction of his enemies. Sinners work their own destruction, and bring upon themselves their own awful doom. In this connection we may rightly speak of the inexorable nature of law. It is a dreadful thing to sin against the great laws of nature and of revelation. "Our God is a consuming fire." We bring upon ourselves our own punishment. In this sense we are the dread arbiters of our own fearful fate.

III. The evil-doer raises striking evidence of his own guilt. "Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman." Crafty as Haman might be, he was not crafty enough to keep his vile purpose a secret. It was evidently well known for whom the gallows was intended. Haman in raising the gallows was preparing a terrible and irresistible evidence against himself. Facts are stubborn things, and whatever poor Haman might attempt to say in his own defence, he could not talk down the gallows raised fifty cubits high. There it was to speak for itself, and to condemn the guilty Haman. How often in life do we see the evil-doer making a gallows fifty cubits high! The sinner unwittingly writes bitter things against himself, and the writing is brought forth in an evil hour to his condemnation. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?"

IV. The evil-doer is practically his own executioner. "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." We must pity Haman in his direful doom; still we feel as if there was a certain fitness in the case. Our natures approve the law of retribution. We seem to feel that unblushing crime

should not go unpunished. The course and the doom of Haman may not be the exact counterpart of every evil-doer's course and doom; yet there is here portrayed a great general law which we would do well to note with all seriousness. When we come to harm on account of our sins, we are too apt to blame our fellows, to blame our circumstances, to blame the devil. We ought to blame ourselves. We only get hung on the gallows we ourselves have erected. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Let us at once proceed, by repenting of our pride, our hate, and our jealousy, to destroy the gallows. Let us look by faith to the cross, and all that is signified thereby, and then any other cross raised by sinful folly will be diverted of its power to do us lasting damage.

"Then was the king's wrath pacified." The flattering minion was removed out of his sight. The projector of wholesale murder was himself destroyed. Ahasuerus himself was not safe so long as Haman was allowed to exist. Wrath, however, is cruel, and nothing but Haman's death could pacify the angry king. If it must needs be that capital punishment be the portion of certain transgressors, the sentence should not be carried out in order to pacify wrath, but to meet the demands of justice, as a deterrent to crime, and to promote the public safety. Well were it if we could dispense with the gallows. Well were it if strict justice tempered by mercy always administered the law to transgressors. God's laws are always wisely and righteously administered. Never yet can it be said that God's wrath was pacified by the execution of any sinner. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was not an exhibition of Divine wrath, but of Divine love. It was the method by which God could be just, and yet the Justifier of the believer. It may be a mystery, but there is in the remedial scheme of the gospel more mercy than mystery.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 7—10.

The king indeed is unjust in fixing this calumny upon Haman; but God is just, who permits the righteous penalty to fall upon him for his lies and calumnies, inasmuch as he would have brought violence upon other virgins or matrons and would have plunged the whole people of God into ruin. Accordingly, it is written, "By what one sinneth, by that also shall he be punished;" and again, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again."—*Feuardent.*

It must also so happen in the just judgment of God, that since the highest minister of state had caused the highest gallows to be erected, in accordance with his greatness of feeling and state position and honours, before which all bowed in adoration to the earth, he should himself be elevated above all other people that were hung.—*Starke.*

Said before the king.] Not a man opens his mouth to speak for Haman, but all against him. Had the cause been better, thus it would have been. Every cur is ready to fall upon the dog that he seeth worried; every man ready to pull a branch from the tree that is falling. Cromwell had experience of this when once he fell into displeasure by speaking against the king's match with Lady Catherine Howard, in defence of Queen Anne of Cleve, and discharge of his conscience, for the which he suffered death, Stephen Gardiner being the chief engineer. Had Haman's cause been like his, albeit he had found as few friends to intercede for him as Cromwell, yet he might have died with as much comfort as he did. But he died more like to the Lord Hungerford, of Hatesby, who was beheaded together with the noble Cromwell; but neither so Christianly suffering nor so quietly dying for his offence committed against nature, viz., buggery. Cromwell exhorted him to repent, and promised him mercy from God; but his heart was hardened, and so was this wicked Haman's. God, therefore, justly set off all hearts from him in his greatest necessity; and now, to add to his misery, brings another of his foul sins to light, that he might be the more condignly cut off.—*Trapp.*

It was an excellent saying of Ambrose.

"If thou canst not hide thyself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide thyself from him, whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun!" You know what Ahasuerus, that great monarch, said concerning Haman: "What," saith he, "will he force the queen before me in the house?" There was killing emphasis in the words "before me." Will he force the queen before me? What, will he dare to commit such villany, and I stand and look on? O sirs, to sin in the sight of God is a thing that he looks upon as the greatest affront, and as the highest indignity that can possibly be done unto him.—*Brooks.*

The thought which is at once suggested to our minds in connection with Haman's execution on the gallows which he had himself prepared for Mordecai, is that of a righteous retribution in providence, a subject which cannot be too delicately handled, nor too cautiously and reservedly applied. There are some who are always ready to interpret calamity as a retribution in providence, with the greatest self-blindness as to their own sins. Let a terrible accident happen to a railway train travelling on sabbath day, and some will be found to describe it as a retribution in providence against sabbath desecration. Alas! Do they never desecrate the sabbath, that they should be so ready to give a stone for bread to the wounded and mourning? Let a theatre, or some other place of public resort not generally approved of, be destroyed by fire, and many lives lost, and some will discourse upon it, in like manner, as a retribution in providence. Do they not reflect that buildings devoted to useful manufacture, and even to the worship of God, have been destroyed in the same way, and with similar disastrous results? If they would not venture to apply the rule in the one case, why should they do it in the other? Cowper has put the doctrine of a universal providence in two lines, with which we must all agree:—

"Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that chequer life."

But when men sit in judgment upon God's judgments, and apply the law of retribution in particular cases, according to their own notions of things, they are in danger, like Job's friends, of mistaking the chastisement of God's children for signal marks of his disapprobation, or, like the barbarians on the island of Melita, who conceived that Paul must be a murderer when the viper had come out of the fire and fastened on his hand, but who, when he had shaken it off and suffered no harm, changed their minds, and said that he must be a god. Better for us rather to make the personal application of all the calamities which occur in the providence of God recommended in the Gospel by Luke, and read therein these words of solemn warning:—"Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

But whilst we cannot consent to men becoming the interpreters of God's judgments in particular cases, we have a great law of retribution clearly indicated as well in the Bible as in profane history. We may call the illustrations of it which might be adduced simply coincidences; but the sin is so conspicuously stamped on the punishment that we can hardly avoid connecting the one with the other in providence. The guilty Agagite takes the place of the unoffending Jew, and bears the punishment which he had prepared for him. Joseph's brethren sold Joseph into Egypt, and by-and-by they were themselves carried down into Egypt. Adoni-bezek had the thumbs and great toes of threescore and ten kings cut off, and when he himself was taken in battle Judah and Simeon had his own thumbs and great toes cut off, moving him to make this confession: "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Herod the Great massacred the innocent little children of Bethlehem, and he himself was overwhelmed with agonizing physical disease, and his numerous family was extinct in a hundred years. Pontius Pilate, who condemned Christ to death; Judas, who betrayed him; and Nero, who slew thousands of early believers, committed suicide, though the last had to call in the aid of others to complete what he had begun. Almost all the

prominent persecutors of the Church have died deaths of violence. Maximinus put out the eyes of thousands of Christians, and afterwards he himself died of a fearful disease of the eyes, in great agony. And Valens, who caused fourscore presbyters to be sent to sea in a ship and burnt alive, himself, defeated by the Goths, fled to a cottage where he was burnt alive. Still more comprehensively we have the Apostle Paul declaring, with reference to those who "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved," that they would be smitten with judicial blindness; "and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

In avoiding Scylla we must beware of falling into Charybdis; in refusing to become interpreters of particular calamitous providences, we must be on our guard against denying a retributive providence altogether. No doubt this specialty in providence comprehends both nations and individuals, noiselessly overtaking evil-doers and causing them to reap as they had sown, according to the proverb—"The feet of the avenging deity are shod with wool." Without commotion or tumult the punishment grows out of the sin, and the transgressor is visited according to his iniquity. In most instances it requires no direct interference of the Almighty, but follows, surely and directly, from the operation of great natural and spiritual laws. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Then a reflection of a different kind is suggested by the feelings of the king after the execution of Haman: "Then was the king's wrath pacified." Modern theology is apt to drift away into mere sentimental views of the character of God. It may be a reaction from the harsh and terrible aspects in which the Divine character was presented in a former age, giving to childhood and youth such an idea of God as was fitted rather to excite terror than inspire with reverence and love. From one extreme, however, we must be careful not to dart to another, equally false and dangerous. We must not conceive of God as simply all love and mercy. We cannot indeed exalt too highly these perfections of his nature, but we must not allow them to shut out from view other attributes of his being. Let these alone have possession of our minds, and we might suppose that there was no need for God being reconciled to sinners, but only of them being reconciled to him; that he is all love and mercy toward them if they would only return to him, and that he will be their Father if they will only submit to be his children. There is a measure of truth in this kind of reasoning, but it is only a half-truth; and a half-truth is sometimes more perilous than unmitigated error. He assures us that he is "angry with the wicked every day;" that he is a "consuming fire;" and that he will "by no means clear the guilty." Though his wrath against the wicked has nothing of vindictiveness or revenge in it, yet is it none the less, but the more, wrath—tremendous wrath. If a king is merciful and loving, as well as just and righteous, his wrath is all the more to be dreaded; and whilst God is infinitely loving and merciful, he cannot allow his love and mercy to overreach his justice, righteousness, and truth. So long as we keep in view only the paternal aspects of the Divine character, we might see in the cross of Christ nothing more than an exhibition of love and mercy, to attract, if possible, the regards of mankind sinners; no real satisfaction offered for sin—"the just for the unjust"—but only a proof and pledge that God was kindly disposed toward them if they would only return to him. How defective and misleading would be such a contemplation of the cross of Christ! Besides the expression of love, it is the endurance by One who was able to bear it, because he had no sin, of the penalty and curse of sin in the room of all who believe. So that only when we come to God, presenting in faith the atonement for sin which Christ made on Calvary, is God's wrath pacified, and the sinner not simply reconciled to him, but he also to the sinner.

The claims of his law and the demands of his righteous government are only and fully satisfied in Christ. Accordingly, we cannot tell the sinner that God's wrath is pacified towards him so long as he has not accepted Christ, and is not to be found in him. It is true that God is all loving and merciful; but his love and mercy cannot reach him so long as he is outside of Christ. Apart from Christ, through unbelief, he cannot be otherwise surveyed than as exposed to wrath—a wrath which shall find its full manifestation in the decisions and allotments of the final day. But in Christ, received by faith, that wrath has already emptied itself and been exhausted in him, and for the true believer there are only love and mercy—love and mercy, the fulness of which can be measured only by the greatness of the sacrifice made, in order that they might rest with him for ever. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Then was the king's wrath pacified."—*McEwan.*

> As of one crucified, whose visage spake
> Fell rancour, malice deep, wherein he died;
> And round him Ahasuerus the great king;
> Esther his bride; and Mordecai the just,
> Blameless in word and deed.
>
> *Carey's Dante.*

Thus Pharaoh drowns the Hebrew males in a river; therefore is drowned himself with his army in a sea. He had laid insupportable burdens on Israel; God returns them with full weight, number, measure. When Israel cut off the thumbs and great toes of Adonibezek, hear the maimed king confess the equity of this judgment: "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me." As proud Bajazet threatened to serve Tamerlane, being conquered,—to imprison him in a cage of iron, and carry him about the world in triumph,—so the Scythian, having took the bragging Turk, put him to the punishment himself had lessoned; carrying and carting him through Asia, to be scorned of his own people. Thus Haman is hanged on his own gallows. Perillus tries the trick of his own torment.—*Adams.*

When Haman desires the ruin of the Jews, procures the king's commission, sends despatches to all the governors of the provinces, sets up a gibbet for Mordecai, and wants nothing but an opportunity to request the execution, he tumbles down to exchange his prince's favours for an exaltation on the gallows. When the serpent increased his malicious cruelty, and cast out a flood against the Church, God makes the earth, the carnal world, to give her assistance, and repel the force that Satan used against her. "The earth helped the woman." When "multitudes shall gather together in the valley of decision," then shall "the Lord roar out of Sion, and be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." And when spiritual Egypt shall make a war against Christ, who sits upon the white horse, and combine all their force for the destruction of his people, then shall the beast and the false prophet be taken, and brought to their final ruin, and their force be broken in a lake of fire, as that of Egypt was in a sea of water. The time of their greatest fierceness shall be the time of Christ's fury. —*Charnock.*

Haman missed of his plot; he fell into danger; he fell into the same danger which he contrived for Mordecai; and was the means of Mordecai's advancement. It had been enough to have woven a spider's web, which is done with a great deal of art, and yet comes to nothing; but to hatch a cockatrice's egg, that brings forth a viper which stings to death, this is a double vexation. Yet thus God delighteth to catch the "wise in the imagination of their own hearts," and to pay them in their own coin. The wicked carry a lie in their right hand; for they trust in man, who is but a *lie;* and, being liars themselves too, no marvel if their hopes prove deceitful, so that, while they sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind.

Mischievous attempts are successless in the long run; for did ever any harden themselves against God and prosper long? Let Cain speak, let Pharaoh, Haman, Ahithophel, Herod; let the persecutors

of the Church for the first two hundred years, let all that ever bore ill-will towards Sion, speak, and they will confess they did but kick against the pricks, and dash against the rocks. The greatest torment of the damned spirit is, that God turns all his plots for the good of those he hates most. He tempted man to desire to become like God, that so he might ruin him; but God became man, and so restored him. God serveth himself of this arch-politician and all his instruments; they are but executioners of God's will while they rush against it. Joseph's brethren sold him that they might not worship him, and that was the very means whereby they came at length to worship him. God delights to take the oppressed party's part. Wicked men cannot do God's children a greater pleasure than to oppose them, for by this means they help to advance them.—*Sibbes.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 3, 4. *Philosopher and enraged emperor.* Joseph charged his brethren that they should come no more in his sight, unless they brought Benjamin with them. We come at our peril into God's presence if we leave his beloved Benjamin, our dear Jesus, behind us. When the philosopher heard of the enraged emperor's menace, that the next time he saw him he would kill him, he took up the emperor's little son in his arms, and saluted him with a Potesne, Thou canst not now strike me. God is angry with every man for his sins. Happy is he that can catch up his Son Jesus; for in whose arms soever the Lord sees his Son, he will spare him. The men of Tyre were fain to intercede to Herod by Blastus. Our intercession to God is made by a higher and surer way; not by his servant, but by his Son.—*Adams.*

There is a notable story which is commonly by divines applied to our present purpose; it is concerning a law among the Molossians, where whosoever came to the king with his son in his arms should be accepted with favour, let his fault be what it might. So let a man be what he will before, yet if he come to God in Christ he cannot be thrust away.—*Janeway.*

The full chest hidden. In the very last year of the Arctic expeditions, last year or the year before, they found an ammunition chest that Commander Parry had left there fifty years ago, safe under a pile of stones, the provisions inside being perfectly sweet and good, and eatable. There it had lain all those years, and men had died of starvation within arm's length of it. It was there all the same. And so, if I may venture to vulgarize the great theme that I am trying to speak about, God has given us his Son, and in him all that pertains to life and all that pertains to godliness. My brothers, take the things that are freely given to men of God. —*McLaren.*

The gipsy horse-stealer. There was a time in our country's history when, accordng to our Draconic code, death was the penalty of horse-stealing. This awful sentence was passed on a poor gipsy who had been guilty of this crime, and no hope of mercy was held out. The young man, for he was but a youth, immediately fell on his knees, and with uplifted hands and eyes addressed the judge as follows: "Oh, my lord, save my life!" The judge replied, "No, you can have no mercy in this world; I and my brother judges have come to the determination to execute horse-stealers, especially gipsies, because of the increase of the crime." The suppliant on his knees still entreated, "Oh, my lord judge, save my life. Do, for God's sake, for my wife's sake, for my child's sake!" "No," replied the judge; "you should have thought of your wife and child before;" and the poor fellow was literally dragged away from his earthly judge. Haman pleaded for his life, but he was taken to the gallows. Vast is the mercy of Heaven. At the eleventh hour the sinner repenting and confessing and believing may find mercy.

Ver. 7. *The French king.* By imploring mercy perhaps you may be saved, but by justifying the injury you cannot but be lost. As the French king, Francis the First, said to a woman kneeling and crying to him for justice, "Stand up, woman, for justice I owe thee; if thou beggest anything, beg mercy." So if you request anything of God, let it be mercy, for he owes you justice; and in this point, God be merciful to you all.

Judge Jeffreys. Very cruel people are sometimes very cowardly. Judge Jeffreys could go through his black assize in the west of England, the terror of the land, manifesting the fury of a wild beast; but when the tide turned, and he saw nothing before him but ignominy and disgrace, he sank into a state of abject fear which was pitiable to see. "Haman was afraid before the king and the queen?" As he well may be. It is an awful moment. His life trembles in the balance. If the king keeps his couch he may be spared. If he rises up abruptly, and withdraws, he is doomed. The king's retirement is like passing solemn judgment. The custom has descended to our times, and the Shah of Persia, or, if not he, certainly some of his immediate predecessors, have condemned men to death in this way.—*Dr. Raleigh.*

Case of retribution. Tamerlane the Great, having made war on Bajaset, Emperor of the Turks, overthrew him in battle, and took him

prisoner. The victor gave the captive monarch at first a very civil reception; and, entering into familiar conversation with him, said, "Now, king, tell me freely and truly what thou wouldest have done with me, had I fallen into thy power?" Bajazet, who was of a fierce and haughty spirit, is said to have thus replied: "Had the gods given unto me the victory, I would have enclosed thee in an iron cage, and carried thee about with me as a spectacle of derision to the world." Tamerlane wrathfully replied, "Then, proud man, as thou wouldest have done to me, even so shall I do unto thee." A strong iron cage was made, into which the fallen emperor was thrust; and thus exposed like a wild beast, he was carried along in the train of his conqueror. Nearly three years were passed by the once mighty Bajazet in this cruel state of durance; and at last, being told that he must be carried into Tartary, despairing of then obtaining his freedom, he struck his head with such violence against the bars of his cage, as to put an end to his wretched life.—*Dr. Cheever.*

Innocence vindicated. It is stated as a singular circumstance in the history of the holy and devoted John Graham, of Ardclach, that he quoted these words not long before his death:—"If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord had not sent me." He had been a victim to the foulest accusations, and driven from his ministerial charge. The utterance was fulfilled in mysterious ways. Those who had persecuted and calumniated him died off long ere old age; by accident, by sudden and fatal sickness, or by their own hands. Thus it has pleased God, on some occasions, to vindicate the reputation of a faithful servant by providences which none can dispute. Mordecai's innocence was vindicated. His triumph was complete. Poor Haman was humiliated, defeated, and executed. If the history of human lives could be rightly interpreted and correctly written, startling and triumphant revelations would be made. It would be seen that the wicked do not always triumph. They cannot; for surely eternity will adjust the false measures of time, if time itself does not so rectify.

CHAPTER VIII.

CRITICAL NOTES.] 1.] The Targums understand by "house" all the people in it, and the entire property belonging thereto.—*Lange.* The confiscation of the property of one publicly executed followed as a matter of course. And to whom could the goods of the Jews' enemy be more appropriately transferred than to Esther the queen?—*Whedon.* **Came before the king]** Was made one of his officers. **2. Took off his ring]** (See ch. iii. 10). By this act Mordecai was advanced to the post of first minister of the king. The king's seal gave the force of law to royal edicts.—*Keil.* A pleasure-seeking Persian king, like Xerxes, was glad to be relieved of the toil of governing, and willingly committed to one favourite after another the task of issuing and sealing with the royal signet the decrees by which the government was administered.—*Rawlinson.* **3.]** Haman was dead, but the edict which he had issued remained in force: therefore Esther "wept and made supplication" to Ahasuerus. **5.]** The introductory formula are in part similar to those used before, but strengthened by the introduction of two new phrases. **Let it be written to reverse the letters]** Perhaps Esther was not sufficiently acquainted with Persian law to know that no royal decree could be reversed.—*Whedon.* **7.]** The answer of Ahasuerus is a refusal, but one softened as much as possible. He first dwells on the proofs he had just given of his friendly feeling towards the Jews; he then suggests that something may be done to help them without revoking the decree. Finally, he excuses himself by appealing to the well-known immutability of Persian law.—*Rawlinson.* Sheltering his imbecility behind the immutability of the law, the king commits the work of saving the Jews to the wit of Mordecai; but reminds him that his device shall stand. Thus Ahasuerus prepares the way for a most fearful conflict of laws. "The suggestion of Ahasuerus quickened the inventive powers of Esther and Mordecai. The scribes were at once summoned, and a decree issued, not revoking the former one, but allowing the Jews to stand on their defence, and to kill all who attacked them. It has been pronounced incredible that any king would thus have sanctioned civil war in all the great cities of his empire; but some even of the more sceptical critics have pronounced that Xerxes might not improbably have done so."—*De Wette.* Besides, there would be no slaughter at all if their enemies did not first attack the Jews. The probability was, that, when the Jews were permitted to arm themselves and stand on the defensive, there would be no conflict at all. But the result showed, that, in many parts of the empire, the heathen attempted to destroy the Jews in spite of the edict.—*Whedon.* **10.]** Posts on horseback. On horseback, on coursers, government coursers, the sons of the stud.—*Keil.* **Sent letters by posts]** This is one of many intimations in this book calculated to engage the attention of those who take interest in studying the progress of society in the arts of convenience and civilization. The testimony of the Greek writers coincides with this, in directing our attention to Persia for the origin of posts and couriers. It is said, that, when the empire became so

vast, as in the time of Cyrus, that monarch thought of a plan for facilitating the exchange of communicating between the court and provincial governments. After having ascertained how far a good horse might go in a day with ease and expedition, he caused stables to be erected at the determined distances throughout his dominions, each with a suitable establishment of horses, and men to take care of them. There was also a post-master at each of these stages, whose duty it was to receive the packets as they arrived, and immediately despatch them with fresh horses and couriers. Thus the posts travelled night and day, without intermission; and hence it was proverbially said that they flew faster than cranes. The expedition with which the king was enabled by this process to obtain intelligence from, and forward edicts to, the remotest parts of his empire, astonished the ancient world. Their admiration resembled that with which European travellers regarded the posting establishments of the Mongol empire, which seems to have been similar to that of the ancient Persians. There is a full and interesting description of it in 'Marco Polo' (ii. 90), a few particulars of which may serve to complete the idea of Oriental establishments of this class. From the capital (Kambalu) roads extended to every part of the empire, having post-houses, with suitable furniture, at every twenty-five or thirty miles. There were altogether ten thousand of these stations, with two hundred thousand horses. The post rode two hundred, and sometimes two hundred and fifty, miles in a day, on occasions of rebellion in the provinces, or other urgent matters. There were other stations, consisting of a few dwellings, three or four miles asunder, occupied by runners or foot-posts, who, being girded, ran as fast as horses (see the note on 1 Sam. viii. 11). These, in dark nights, ran before the horsemen with links to light them along; they also carried letters, mandates, and parcels, to or from the khan, who thus received news or fruit in two days from places ten stages distant, as from Kambalu to Shangtu. Similar establishments are still kept up in China and Japan.—*Kitto.* **11.**] But would not the Jews have defended themselves without any such order from the king? They could expect nothing but death in any case, and, therefore, would have fought with the energy of despair. True, but this edict allowed them to arm and prepare for self-defence. But for this edict, any movement towards self-defence would have been crushed at the very outset. A spasmodic defence with empty hands would have accomplished nothing; but the king's decree enabled the Jews to arm and gather into companies.—*Whedon* (abridged). **14. Being hastened**] There were still eight months; but the messengers were hastened that the enemies might be warned not to make any attack, and that the Jews might everywhere have ample time to prepare themselves for self-defence.—*Whedon.* **15. Crown of gold**] Not a crown like the king's, but a mere golden band or coronet—Atarah.—*Rawlinson.* Royal apparel of blue and white. State garments such as became the grand vizier; royal robes of royal colours.—*Whedon.* It is well to compare this description of Mordecai's appearance on leaving the palace with Xenophon's description of the attire in which Cyrus himself appeared in public. "Cyrus himself then appeared, wearing *a turban, which was raised high above his head, with a vest of a purple colour, half mixed with white;* and this mixture of white none else is allowed to wear. On his legs he had yellow buskins; his outer robe was wholly of purple; and about his turban was a diadem or wreath" (Cyrop. viii. 23). Every one of these things occur in the description of Mordecai's royal attire, except the yellow buskins. Xenophon, however, adds, that the diademed turban was *not* peculiar to the king, but was allowed to his relations. This doubtless answers to the "great crown" which Mordecai wore. The description does not correspond with the appearance of the cap which the king wears in the sculptures of Persepolis. This difference, which has perplexed antiquarians, is probably owing to the fact that the sculptures represented the king as he usually appeared *in his palace;* whereas the description refers to his appearance when he went *abroad,* or on occasions of high state within-doors.—*Kitto.* The garments in which Mordecai left the king are evidently the State garments of the first minister, which Mordecai received at his installation to his office; and, as such, no fresh token of royal favour, but only his induction in his new dignity, and a sign of his induction to all who saw him issue from the palace so adorned.—*Keil.* **City of Shushan rejoiced**] That is, the inhabitants as a whole. They had probably deprecated the massacre awaiting the Jews, and perhaps apprehended with fear the great disorders and dangers that would ensue.—*Lange.* **16. The Jews had light**] Light (this particular form of the noun occurs only here and Ps. cix. 12) is a figurative expression for prosperity. **17. And many of the people became Jews**] This must not be explained only, as by Clericus and Grotius, of a change of religion on the part of the heathen that they might procure the favour of the queen, and avert the wrath of Mordecai. This may have induced some; but the majority certainly acted from a conviction, forced upon them by the unexpected turn of affairs in favour of the Jews, of the truth of the Jewish religion, and the power of that faith and trust in God manifested by the Jews, and so evidently justified by the fall of Haman, and the promotion of Mordecai.—*Keil.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 1, 2.

SUDDEN BUT WISE CHANGES.

In affairs of conscience first thoughts are best. In affairs of prudence second thoughts are best. But even in affairs of conscience deliberation may be necessary because we do not always know how far conscience may be properly enlightened

We have to see to it that what we think is the voice of conscience be not some other voice. Sudden movement, then, is very often dangerous and misleading. Make haste slowly is a wise exhortation for the management of human affairs. Many a man has taken a hurried step which has proved disastrous, and which no after movements have been able to remedy. Perhaps the English nation may be considered as moving too slowly. Certainly it takes a long time in this country to repair old abuses. But this very slowness may help to give us our national stability. In these two verses we have sudden changes; but they will be seen to be wise in every respect. There is no reason to suppose that Ahasuerus had any cause to repent of the steps which he now took so suddenly. Without any long parliamentary deliberations he made a prime minister, and most important changes in the court, and all tended to increase the national glory.

I. A sensible reversal. "On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen." Not only was Esther the king's favoured queen, but she showed herself a virtuous and sensible woman—one likely to make a wise disposal of the blessings of wealth. Haman only thought of using wealth for selfish purposes. Esther thought of using her temporal advantages for the good of others. That she so thought we judge by her conduct. She did not talk great things only, but did them. How sadly often do we find in this world that the "house" is possessed by the selfish Haman! What a blessing to the community when the "house" becomes the possession of a benevolent and patriotic Esther! Take the house here as emblematical of Haman's wealth. When the eternal King gives a "house" it becomes us to feel that our responsibility is thereby increased. We must not close the house, but open its doors and its rooms for the benefit of others. Still be careful as to the guests. God has given to each and to all a soul-house. We are to be careful as to the mastership. Let not Satan rule; let Jesus rule, and then there will be light, and gladness, and joy, and honour in the house.

II. A grateful confession. "And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her." The confession was not forced from Esther. She did not utter it by reason of the terrors of the inquisitor; she did not own the relationship because she saw that Mordecai was about to make the declaration; she was impelled to it by a sweet sense of gratitude. Here is one of those omissions in the narrative that we could wish had not been made. A pleasant story was that which Esther had now to tell unto the king. We listen in pleasant fancy as Esther, inspired by gratitude, told the king what Mordecai *was unto her*. She would tell of the blood relationship, but surely she would tell much more. Certainly she told much more if she told *all* that Mordecai was unto her. Sometimes the words fail us, when inspired by gratitude, as we try to tell all that a true-hearted one has been to us. Some there are with whom we have no family connection who have been more to us than the nearest relatives. Esther confers honour on Mordecai by declaring all that he had been unto her. We confer honour by grateful confession of the services rendered to us by others. Let us not forget to acknowledge our indebtedness. And shall we not bring honour to Jesus by the confession of what he has been and is to us. Time will not suffice to tell the tale of the Saviour's doings on our behalf. We have to tell what he is to us in the way of spiritual relationship; we have to tell what he is to us as prophet, priest, and king. The sweet tale will last through eternity.

III. A reasonable token of honour. "And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai." It was just and fair that this honour should be conferred upon Mordecai, for he had rendered important services to the king, and was evidently a man that might be safely trusted with the management of most important affairs. But it was not right that Mordecai had been compelled to wait so long before his services were acknowledged. Time is on the side of him who will but wait; but sometimes we have to wait so long that our

time is over. We do not now live for centuries, and cannot afford to keep on waiting too long. Many a man has waited only for the grave. The only waiting which cannot end in disappointment is that of quietly and hopefully and earnestly doing the work of the Lord, and looking for the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Then the great Master will give his tokens of approval and of honour. Oh, to be sealed by heaven's eternal King!

IV. A judicious arrangement. "And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman." If Esther, having received the gift from the king, was not at liberty to transfer it to Mordecai, the next best thing was to make Mordecai steward of the property. She had received proof of Mordecai's sagacity, and could therefore securely entrust to him the management of her property. He would turn it to the best possible account, both for individual and collective advantage. Having shown himself wise and faithful in small spheres, it was judicious to raise him now to fill a higher sphere. All his recorded after-course declares that he was not unfaithful to his many important trusts. If we want to rise, let it be by faithful service in that sphere where we find ourselves placed. Woe to the man who seeks to rise by trickery! The crash must come sooner or later. The deception must be found out. The blown bladder will receive a prick, and then there will be the humiliating collapse. Many instances of this in modern times. Better to remain always in obscurity than to rise by false methods, for such rising is sure to end in a most hideous down-fall. A high position is always perilous—perilous in England with its stable institutions, as well as in the Persian empire with all its fickleness. But a high position reached by falsehood and deceit is especially perilous. "He that is down needs fear no fall." "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud." Haman thus had not reached the gallows. We can even suppose that Mordecai was happier at the king's gate than when ruling in the palace, and over Haman's house.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1, 2.

We are taught by Mordecai's example that even pious men sometimes come to the head of affairs, and are safely entrusted with the reins of government; and that God adorns with this glory on earth those whom he will afterwards crown in heaven likewise. They are promoted, however not so much for their own sake as that they may aid and promote the Church and people of God, and may free and console those in affliction.—*Feuardent.*

Be not solicitous about treasuring up the riches of this world. What you can gain is to-day yours, to-morrow you know not whose it shall be. Should it fall into the hands of your children after you, you know not whether they will be wise men or fools, whether they will be losers or gainers by the possession of it. But you know not whether it may not fall into the hands of your most abhorred enemies. This is often the fate of ill-gotten riches. "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." With what vexation would Haman have thought of that wealth in which he gloried, if he had foreseen that it was to be possessed by a Jewess. Would he not rather have chosen to live a beggar all his days than leave his wealth to persons whom he so mortally hated?

The queen was enriched beyond her expectations and wishes; yet the wealth bestowed upon her would enable her to perform important services to her beloved nation. The donation of it by the king, to whom it was forfeited, was a testimony of his affection, to which she still must have recourse, with new petitions for her people. Above all, this donation was a remarkable testimony of the kindness and justice of the Divine providence, which put into her hands that immense wealth of the enemy of her nation, by which he would have bribed the king, if a bribe had been necessary, to procure their destruction. The Lord had already not only wrought deliverance for her, but had given her an accession of riches

out of the snares that had been laid for her kinsman; and she was thereby encouraged to hope that he would bring to a happy conclusion that great work that occupied her mind.

Her kinsman, too, was highly advanced, both on her account and his own. The king had formerly caused his favour for Mordecai to be proclaimed through the city of Shushan; but now he loaded him with real and substantial honours, which could put him into a proper condition for protecting his nation, exposed to danger for his sake.

It was now the fifth year since the adopted daughter of Mordecai was seated on an imperial throne, and hitherto it was not known that he stood in any relation to the queen, or had showed to her the kindness of a father.

The king must surely at least have condemned his own thoughtlessness in inquiring so little after Esther's friends. He now discerned, that, besides his unrequited obligations to Mordecai for saving his life, he owed to him likewise the graces and accomplishments of his queen, and almost her life; for he had been to her a second father, without whose kind care none knows what might have befallen her in her tender years.

It would be likewise a powerful recommendation of Mordecai, that he had hitherto lived quietly in a low station, without so much as mentioning his claims to preferment. It appeared plainly that he was more careful to deserve the king's favour than to enjoy it, and that greatness had no charms but the opportunities it might give him of doing good, or preventing evil. Those are fittest for high stations that are best satisfied with any station in which Providence is pleased to put them.

The king put Mordecai into Haman's place; and the queen, who now thought it highly expedient to inform the king of Mordecai's kindness and relation to her, did likewise make him her steward. To her dying day she forgot not the kindness showed to her in the days of her youth, and behaved as the best of daughters to the best of fathers.

Gratitude to benefactors is essential to a virtuous character. If you call a man ungrateful you need say nothing more of him, you have already said everything that is bad; nor will the highest elevation excuse forgetfulness of benefits received in a lower condition. The blessed Jesus, exalted above men and angels, forgets none of the kindnesses showed to him in the persons of his brethren in a low condition upon earth; but what is done to the least of them is rewarded as if it had been done to himself. We need not envy those women who ministered to him of their substance in the days of his humiliation the glorious rewards bestowed upon them in his state of exaltation. We still have it in our power to feed him when he is hungry, to give him drink when he is thirsty, to clothe him when he is naked; and he will not be unrighteous to forget our works and labours of love to his name. Did Esther in her royal condition retain such a kind remembrance of the friends of her low estate, and shall we doubt of the infinitely superior virtues of him who is the fairest among the children of men, to the operation of whose Spirit we owe everything that is lovely in our temper and conduct?

Esther, on the throne, retained the kindness of her youth, not only to Mordecai, but to all her friends and all her people.—*Lawson.*

1. In the first place, we see how, in the providence of God, the wealth which worldly men would use in opposition to the interests of God's cause and people may be wrested from them, and made available for the advancement of these interests. It was painful enough to the proud spirit of Haman to be compelled to conduct Mordecai, whom he hated, through the city in triumph; but it would have been anguish intolerable to him if he had been told that this man was forthwith to be his heir, and to have all his wealth placed at his disposal. So not unfrequently it happens, that the riches which have been accumulated by those who would grudge the expenditure even of a small part for any purpose purely religious, pass into the hands of those who feel their responsibility as stewards of God's bounties, and who gladly employ his gifts for the promotion of objects by

which their fellow-men are really benefited. The conclusion which we draw from all this, and which, without further remark, we leave with you, is, that the best and happiest arrangement which a man can make with respect to the good things which have been bestowed upon him is, that in his lifetime he seek to be personally the dispenser of good to others. If he lives and acts in this spirit, then he will have the less anxiety as to the disposal of what he may be able to leave behind him.

2 In the second place, the peculiar providence which we see exercised in the case of Mordecai teaches us that men may be well content to wait, while they are in the way of well-doing, until they receive their recompense. It was with no view to temporal reward, we most fully believe, that Mordecai assumed the guardianship of his orphan cousin, and brought her up tenderly in the knowledge of the God of her fathers. But if he had any expectation of reward, when he discovered and made known the plot against the life of the king, and such expectation he might have reasonably enough cherished, he had long to wait for the realizing of it. But he waited patiently, and at length his reward came, in greater fulness than his most sanguine hope could have anticipated. Now even in worldly things, although not on the same large scale, we often can mark similar movements of providence. Worth and faithfulness and humility, after they have been long neglected, are brought into the light, and are honoured in proportion to the neglect which they formerly experienced.

But it is not with exclusive, or indeed with special, reference to the administration of providence in this world that we speak at present. History sets before us the examples of many, who were the excellent of the earth, persons of whom the world was not worthy, whose deeds of benevolence, and whose faithful services to the Lord and the men of their generation, were never openly acknowledged during their lifetime. Against reproach and obloquy, and opposition the most crushing, many have had to pursue their way, compelled to hear even their good evil spoken of. But this does not alter the fact, that the reward of all Christ's faithful servants is certain. It is not for reward that they labour in his service; it is from love to him, and for the glory of God. Yet as Christ himself "looked forward to the joy that was set before him," so his people are taught by his word and his example to have respect to the recompense of reward. Now as Mordecai had to wait for a season before he obtained what he was well entitled to receive, would it have been a matter of great consequence although he had to wait for a few years longer? If he had received at length, after a very protracted season of delay, what he waited for, while he had still full power left him to enjoy it, would it not have been well? Then may we not say, that although believers in Christ have to wait for their reward until death come to carry them away, or, as we may say, until this their last enemy come to lead them in triumph into the presence of the King, clad in the glorious robe of his righteousness, will it not be well, seeing that then they shall be in condition to enjoy fully and for ever the blessedness of being with him and rejoicing in his smile?—*Davidson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 3, 4.

Sin Survives the Sinner.

When Haman was executed Ahasuerus doubtless expected to be left at peace. He would suppose that by one strenuous effort he had delivered himself from the encircling confusion; and, unaccustomed to personal effort and responsibility, he would overrate the good he had accomplished. So men are continually surprised if a little virtuous effort is not considered a full compensation for a long course of sin But evil is not easily rooted out of a heart, or out of a state. Bad habits once

formed in the heart soon become inveterate; and bad institutions once founded in a state tend to perpetuate themselves for ever. It is written in the Psalms, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." So, frequently, sin bears painful fruits long after the sinner himself has grievously repented. Thus David received Divine forgiveness, and yet along with Uriah's life the splendour and happiness of his reign faded away for ever. As he sinned with Bathsheba, so Amnon sinned with Tamar; as he murdered Uriah, so Absalom murdered Amnon; and as his pride numbered the people, so Adonijah's pride, and Absalom's pride, rebelled against his authority. Let no man fancy that by a little repentance he can undo the effects of a great sin. As some weeds are hardly to be eradicated from a favourable soil, so sin finds a congenial lodging in the heart, and is slow to leave. Ahasuerus, who looked to spend his days in idle dalliance, now learnt that Haman's death had not delivered him from his troubles, for Esther came to him to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite.

I. Evil outlives its first contrivers. (*a*) Haman is dead, but the mischief he devised still hangs over the Jews. The laws of Persia could not be reversed, and therefore Haman's edict had to stand; the laws of nature will not be reversed, and therefore a thing done once is done for ever. A passing stranger may loosen a stone in an embankment, and go on his way; but a whole province will bewail his folly. An infidel father trains most carefully an infidel son; the son becomes an eminent and influential writer, and spreads through a whole generation the fatal poison he imbibed on his father's knee. An English colonist, filled with pity for the Caribbæans, introduces negro slavery into the West Indies,—doing evil that good may come,—and for centuries those fair islands are cursed by his device. Always men perish, but their work remains. As he who scatters thistledown in a field of wheat does an evil which years may be needed to cure; so every sinner scatters bad seed into a prolific soil. (*b*) Evil tends to permanency, because of the natural corruption of the heart. As acids and alkalis have a mutual affinity, so that they rush together with violence, and can only be separated by force; so is there an affinity between the heart and sin. Hence, when evil is once published there are many ready to embrace it. Certain constitutions of body will take every infectious disease that they approach; and every form of evil finds somewhere a congenial home. This principle is assisted by the solidarity of our race. The whole universe is bound into one system, with a mutual interdependence among all its parts: the meanest and the noblest parts of creation are indissolubly bound together. Especially is this true of man. No man liveth to himself. We are all so closely locked and interlocked together that what affects one affects all. Now if man were not *liable to disease*, or if, being liable, he could *live alone*, there would be no epidemics; so if man were not liable to sin, or if, being liable, he could be set free from his fellow-sinners, evil might soon cease. But as the case is, sin ever tends to spread widely, and to stand permanently.

II. Evil yields before holy self-sacrifice. Esther, having had formerly so free an access and so good success in her appeals, ventures to draw near again. (*a*) Esther was intensely solicitous, for we read, "she wept and besought him." The welfare of the people was dearer to her than her own. The mere dilettante accomplishes nothing, for evil grows naturally; while virtue is like those birds of song which come from afar, are caught with difficulty, and are ever ready to depart. There must be strenuous effort on the part of those who would do good. She wept over temporal ruin; do we weep over spiritual ruin? (*β*) Esther was persistent. She came again. As her former success encouraged her to approach again to an earthly, so our former successes should encourage us to approach the heavenly King. Like the poor widow, men ought always to pray and not to faint. (*γ*) Esther was boldly self-sacrificing. Unbidden she came to the king, bearing her life in her hands. A noble type of the sacrifice and intercession of Christ is presented by this scene in the life of Esther. In entire self-forgetfulness and self-surrender she ventured her life in order to plead

for her kindred; and Christ gave his life that, now within the veil, he might make intercession for his kinsmen after the flesh. (δ) Esther succeeded. The king stretched out the golden sceptre. Oh, Esther, thou hast won for ever the gratitude of every Jew. Moses delivered from slavery; thou hast delivered from death! A sword was about to destroy the whole race, and thy fair neck was stretched under to avert the blow! Our Intercessor has equal success. As the wishes of Mordecai were presented by Esther, and she brought back assured safety; so our petitions poor, babbling cries, are presented by Christ, sprinkled with his own blood, and return to us in showers of blessing.

III. Evil crushed, but not killed. Ahasuerus could only allow Mordecai to invent some contrivance to counteract the evil. To undo the wickedness of Haman seemed impossible, and, to avoid the results of it, the whole empire incurred the risk of civil war. To destroy is always easier than to save; and many a man, who has no hammer for building, has a good torch for burning. As a madman may set on fire a cathedral which a whole generation cannot rebuild, or as a child may tear a painting which only a Raphael could reproduce; so one sin may ruin a soul which only God could save. Partially the effects of sin may be destroyed. The guilty conscience may be set at rest, and the foul heart may be cleansed; the gates of hope may be opened, and those of despair may be shut; but some of the effects endure for ever. A prodigal wastes his estate by intemperance, and it is never restored; a nation is hurried by ambition into unjust war, and is maimed for ever; a suicide takes poison, and has no more opportunity of repentance on earth. The action may be temporary, and the results eternal.

IV. Practical lessons. (α) The folly of infallibility. For either Pope or Kaiser to say, "The thing is settled, and cannot be reconsidered," is to doom the Church or the State to dire disaster. For the imperfect state of man on earth, "live and learn" is a suitable motto. But, like the Bourbons, the kings of Persia learnt nothing and forgot nothing. (β) The power of intercession. Our Lord himself takes a precisely parallel case to that of Esther to teach the efficacy of prayer. As she, in the parable, won by her importunity a blessing from the unwilling, much more may we by our pleading secure the mercy of the ever-willing. Esther's earnestness, her humility, and her self-forgetfulness, teach how to draw near to God. (γ) The awful nature of sin. The actions that are performed the most thoughtlessly may ruin the soul. As one frosty night when the bloom is on the trees may destroy the hopes of spring, as one fierce gale may dash the gallant ship against the rocks; so one sin may ruin the soul. Sickness does not weaken its hold, and death does not destroy its venom. If once the venom is seated in the soul, there is only one healer, and he Almighty, who can wash away the stain.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 3, 4.

Sin never dies of age. It is as when a young man dies in the full fire and strength of his youth by some vehement distemper; it, as it were, tears and forces and fires his soul out of his body. He that will come and fight it out with his corruption to the last shall find that it will sell its life at a dear rate; it will strive and fight for it, and many a doubtful conflict will pass between that and the soul. It may give a man many a wound, many a foil, and many a disheartening blow; for, believe it, the strong man will fight for his possession.—*South.*

My friends, the old statement, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is absolutely true, universally true. The gospel is not its abrogation. It modifies it, gives it a new aspect, in some respects it gives it a new incidence; but be sure of this, that the harvest has to be gathered. If you waste your youth no repentance will send the shadow back upon the dial, or recover the ground lost by idleness, or restore the constitution shattered by dissipation, or give again the resources wasted upon vice, or bring back fleeting opportunities.

If you forget God and live without him in the world, fancying that it is time enough to become "religious" when you "have had your fling,"—even were you to come back at last, and remember how few do,—you could not obliterate the remembrance of misused years, nor the deep marks which they had left upon imagination, and thought, and taste, and habit.—*Maclaren.*

When the king "held out the golden sceptre towards Esther" she was animated with greater confidence, and "stood before him" with touching tenderness, and hearty self-consecration to the cause which she pleaded. She importuned him to issue a new decree, reversing the edict of Haman for the destruction of the Jews —"For how," said she, "can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Her love for her people was intense, self-sacrificing, and disinterested. She hinged her intercession upon that love. For her own sake did she ask that the lives of her kindred should be spared. In this aspect of it her intercession reminds us of the advocacy and intercession of the Saviour. How vast was his love for his people! Not only did he imperil his life for their sakes, but gave himself "a ransom for many." He intercedes for them in heaven, and is mighty and all-prevailing because that intercession is centred in himself. How could he endure to see those perish for whom he died? and whom, in his exaltation, he ardently loves? If such a contingency could be supposed possible the trial would overwhelm him, and spoil his satisfaction and joy. They are his kindred—his brethren; and in testimony of his love for them, as well as in proof of his ceaseless intercession in their behalf, he appears in the midst of the throne, and of the elders, and of the living ones, "a lamb as it had been slain." How many Jews were there in Persia who knew of the sentence of death which had been passed against them, but who knew not the powerful, loving intercessor whom they had before the king! And there are not a few, even within the enclosure of the Church, who, whilst dreading the condemnation under which they have been laid by sin, take not home to their hearts the consolation which arises from the intercession of the Saviour. As the appearance of Esther before the king, with her tears and earnest love-pleading, would have sent a thrill of hope throughout millions of hearts in the Persian empire, had it been everywhere visible, so could the sight of Christ before the throne of God be witnessed by faith by all believers, the burden of fear which oppresses many souls throughout the earth would be removed, and there would be the peace and tranquillity of resting in his love. In the survey of our own condition he could not discover any arguments which he could successfully use to secure our forgiveness and final deliverance, but in himself he has all-prevailing pleas. And whilst the believer's prayers derive their power from the concluding words—"For Jesus' sake;" these words receive their confirmation and response in heaven, where Jesus pleads in our behalf for his own name's sake.

"Fair is the lot that's cast for me,
I have an advocate with thee;
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead."
M'Ewen.

Oh queen, thou art victor now! Thou art ascending a higher and a holier throne than that on which thou wast crowned on the day of thine espousals. The great king was but now holding forth to thee the golden sceptre on which thy very life was hung, and thou didst arise and stand as a weeping suppliant before him. And lo! now thou art waving a far more powerful sceptre, albeit invisible, over his head! Thou art ruling him partly by the power of womanly beauty and accomplishment over a fitful but susceptible nature, but still more by the irresistible power of moral earnestness, by the grandeur of patriotism, and by the holy spell of self-sacrificing love! And soon the pens of the scribes will be busy for thee, and the swift beasts will be carrying thy message of life to distant provinces, and thy poor people far and near will gratefully bless thy name.—*Raleigh.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 5, 6.

The Pleading of a Great Passion.

Patriotism is among the noblest and strongest passions of the human heart. This warm and self-forgetting devotion to the claims of our country often very closely resembles the all-reaching love which is produced by Christianity. If, indeed, the Church can boast of martyrs, men who have died rather than deny the truth, every great nation can tell of patriots who chose death rather than the dishonour of their country. In ancient Sparta this passion burned with so hot a flame that mothers rejoiced when their dead but triumphant sons were carried home upon their shields; and a mother was, at least on one great occasion, known to slay her son who had turned coward upon the field of battle. The patriotism of the Jews, being a religious as well as a national sentiment, was peculiarly strong. With the glory of the nation, the success and even the existence of the religion were inextricably involved: if Israel were destroyed, the worship of Jehovah ceased from among men; and if David's line were cut off, the world's Redeemer could never appear. Now, if it was the proudest boast of ancient days to be able to say, "I am a Roman citizen;" and if so many of us would not sell for untold wealth our British birthright; how much more noble is it to say, "I am a citizen of heaven." The very dust and stones of Zion should be precious in our sight. No sacrifices can be too great which are made for Christ, and no work can be mean which tends toward the extension of his kingdom. The noblest offices of the world are mean and poor beside the humblest duties of the Church. We cannot refrain from a lofty emotion when we remember the glories of our spiritual temple. The temple of Jerusalem has passed away; but the true Zion, of which that was but a type, is established for ever. Now the whole of Esther's life shows that she was under the influence of both the national and the religious sentiments. But perhaps in all the story, her patriotism never shines so beautifully as in this paragraph. All the grace of a tender woman, all the exquisite tact of a woman deeply in earnest, and all the deep pathos of a woman's heart, are richly displayed.

I. A great passion inspires humility. If it please the king, and if the thing seem right before the king. Pride is effaced in the presence of a lofty emotion. That the thing was in itself right she does not venture to assert, but recognizes the supreme power of the Oriental despot. As a mountain torrent, swollen by the winter rains, sweeps away the feeble dykes which were intended to impede its overwhelming progress; so the lofty passion which inspired her heart made Esther oblivious of her own claims upon the king. Lest she should injure her plea, she does not stop to insist upon absolute right; but asks as a favour what might have been demanded as an act of justice. She was the wise counsellor, and Ahasuerus was the fool; and yet she descends even below his level. Yet if her language was becoming in her lips when she addressed only an earthly monarch, much more is such submission suitable on the lips of a Christian. Possibly many an earnest prayer meets with no Divine "I will" in answer, because what ought to have been asked as a favour is demanded almost as a right. Our ignorance, which knows not what is expedient,—our folly, which wishes for injurious comforts,—and our guilt, which takes away all merit from our prayers,—are all arguments for humility. Above all is the example of our Lord, who prayed "Thy will be done."

II. A great passion consecrates personal gifts. "If I be pleasing in his eyes." What treasures of wealth, genius, and affection have been laid on the altar of patriotism! Even for a shilling a day men will be found ready to die rather than submit to the dishonour of their flag. No need to travel back to either Jewish or Roman history for illustrations of the text. The grand valour of the Dutch

in their wars against Spain, or the countless deeds of daring performed on many a desperate field by British troops, show that every generous heart holds the country dearer than the life. Equally wonderful the triumphs of faith! Elliott and Brainard, Martyn and Schwartz, were animated by the same passion for the heavenly that inspired Esther for the earthly kingdom. So the Cobbler of Leicestershire conquered the difficulties of forty dialects in order that, beneath the shadow of ancient temples or high on the slopes of swelling hills, he might preach Christ to the people of India. So Howard, or Wilberforce, or Livingstone were equally inspired by Christ with the grand enthusiasm of humanity.

III. A great passion creates a delicate tact. "Let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman." Thus, with all a woman's subtle insight into the heart, she does not remind the king of his share in the iniquity; she only speaks of the sin of Haman. A lower level of patriotism might have reproached the king with his own folly; but in her lofty zeal for her people she avoids all manner of reproach. It will be time enough for reproaches when her petition has failed. If the king will not undo the wrong that he has done, then she will cast in her lot with her kindred, and fling the king's favours back in his face. Meanwhile she builds for him a bridge of gold. Many seem more anxious to reprove the sinner than to remove the sin. Accordingly they are full of invective, and the sinner "turns away in a rage." Those who are pleading for Christ need, along with other noble gifts, a delicate tact. It is easy to make the sinner cry, "What! am I to beg and pray like a beaten child? No! Let Divine vengeance fall. Terror shall not make me afraid." And truly if hell were the only motive of the Gospel there would be some reason in the bitter words. But as Esther pleaded delicately for her people, so the preacher should plead wisely for his Master. Men are oftener to be led than driven; as flies are caught by honey rather than by vinegar.

IV. A great passion is called up by a great occasion. "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?" It is sometimes said as an objection to Christianity that the Bible does not teach the duty of patriotism. But by example it does. The example of our Lord as he wept over the city is a supreme instance. Here is the example of Esther. (*α*) Patriotism is a noble sentiment. It arises above the natural selfishness that confines affection in narrow limits, and extends to all the nation. It burns more brightly in a small brave nation than in a vast empire; so Athens, Judea, Montenegro were noted for this virtue. It feeds upon the noble traditions of the past, so that the example of a Washington becomes reproductive. It is injured by party faction, so that a nation torn in two by intestine strife is open to the arts of any invader. Often it is altogether destroyed by the vices of a ruler; thus, it is said that the Moors were introduced into Spain, and the English into Ireland, in order that certain nobles might revenge themselves upon their king. But this virtue never shines so brightly as in days of disaster. Motley's 'History of the Dutch Republic' is a magnificent illustration of this principle. As Macaulay speaks of that stubborn British valour which never shines so brightly as at the close of a long and doubtful day; so true patriotism never flames up so high as when an invader's foot is planted on our shores. Then a patriot may use the language of Pitt—"I would never lay down my arms; never! never! never!" (*β*) This virtue has corresponding dangers. As humility tends to cowardice, courage to recklessness, liberality to prodigality, so that Aristotle teaches that virtue is always a mean between two extremes; similarly patriotism tends to ostentation, to self-confidence, and injustice. A Roman pardoned any wickedness by which the territory or wealth of Rome was increased; Englishmen condone many a crime because it seems to be for the national advantage. Artifices which would rouse the derision of the whole country if they were to be perpetrated by the French, become sacred as soon as they are practised by statesmen of our own (*γ*) Patriotism will some day be merged in a far wider sentiment. As the farmer

sows two kinds of seed in the same field, and when the one which grows more rapidly has ripened and is cut down, then the other more slowly comes to maturity; so amid the thick growth of family and national affection there is slowly developing a far deeper and nobler passion, which will look forward to the day when, in all the earth, there shall be but one nation, whose king is Christ.

V. A great passion does not overlook family affection. "Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" The national sentiment arises first in the family; and as the domestic affections are pure and strong, or corrupt and weak, will be the growth or decline of the nation. In the great days of Rome divorces were unknown for centuries together; and as the family ties relaxed the whole empire became corrupt. As Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; so Esther could not separate herself from her people. The vine which hangs its rich clusters of grapes over some stately palace sends its roots far under the ground to perennial springs of water; and so, while Esther adorned the palace with her beauty, she still felt that she grew up out of a despised race of Jews who usually lived far away from the court. Humanly speaking, her whole virtue sprang from her adherence to her people. Distrust the man who treats lightly the claims of family and home. Family affection is essential to the State, is consecrated by Christianity; and here Esther becomes a type of Him who, though exalted to a nobler throne than that of Shushan, still remembers his kinsmen after the flesh.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 5, 6.

1. This petition Esther presents with much affection. She fell down at his feet and besought him with tears: every tear as precious as any of the pearls with which she was adorned. It was time to be earnest when the Church of God lay at stake. Let none be so great as to be unwilling to stoop, none so merry as to be unwilling to weep, when thereby they may do any service to God's Church and people. Esther, though safe herself, fell down and begged with tears for the deliverance of her people.

2. She expresses it with great submission, and a profound deference to the king, and his wisdom and will. If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight. Even then when we have the clearest reason and justice on our side, and have the clearest cause to plead, yet it becomes us to speak to our superiors with humility and modesty, and not to talk like demandants when we are supplicants. There is nothing lost by decency and good breeding. As soft answers turn away wrath, so soft askings obtain favour.

3. She enforces her petition with a pathetic plea: "For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people?" Little comfort can I have of my own life if I cannot prevail for theirs: as good share in the evil myself as see it come upon them; for how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred that are dear to me? Esther, a queen, owns her poor kindred, and speaks of them with a very tender concern. Now it was that she mingled her tears with her words, that she wept and made supplication. We read of no tears when she begged for her own life; but now that she is sure of that, she wept for her people. Tears of pity and tenderness are the most Christ-like. They that are truly concerned for the public would rather die in the ditch than live to see the desolations of the Church of God and the ruin of their country. Tender spirits cannot bear to hear of the ruin of their people and kindred, and therefore dare not omit any opportunity of giving them relief.—*M. Henry.*

We should have sympathy for the oppressed brethren in the faith (1 Peter iii. 8; Col. iii. 12; Gal. vi. 10). The innocence of the guiltless should be protected (1 Sam. xx. 32). He who has no pity for the pious and innocent when they are in danger is not worthy

of the name of a man, much less that of a Christian; for we are members of one body (1 Cor. xii. 10).—*Starke.*

She had her life already given her at her petition; but unless she might have her people at her request, who were sold as well as herself, her life would be unto her a joyless, that is, a lifeless, life. It is rather a death than a life that is spent in heaviness and horror. And this would be Esther's case if her people should be massacred, as was designed and decreed. . . . How can I? and shall I see? how should I do otherwise than sink at the sight? Melancthon said that the good Œcolampadius died of grief for the Church's calamities. Nehemiah was heart-sick for the breaches of Joseph. Moses wished himself expunged, and Paul accursed, rather than it should go ill with God's people.—*Trapp.*

Indeed there is no sublimity of human character to equal that which is reached in such a mood. Take the greatest men who have lived, in their greatest moments, you will find that either they are in this mood or in one not far removed from it. Morally, the grandest act in the life of Moses, to our thinking, is not to be found on the granite peaks of Sinai amid the thunders, and the darkness, and the flames; nor on Pisgah, with the far-stretching land of promise lying in light before him; but when grieved, and humbled, and disappointed with the idolatries of the people, and yet clinging passionately to them still, he threw himself before God as their intercessor, crying, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin,—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." If I fail in this I fail in everything. Life itself will hardly be desirable any longer. If this people for whom I have lived is to die, let me die with them, and let us all be forgotten together.

David could sing with loud voice to the praise of God. He could cry to him in the lonely wilderness by night until his voice echoed among the rocks and hills. He could fight at the head of the bravest. He could sometimes magnanimously spare the life of an enemy, even when, by sacrificing that life, his own advancement would be promoted. But among all the moods of his life, none, probably, is really diviner than that which is expressed in these words, written apparently while his heart was melted, while his tears were flowing,—"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

St. Paul, often great in this greatness, is never more conspicuously so than when he declares that he has "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart," and that he "could wish that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh." Like Esther, his cry is, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"—only his meaning covers the spiritual and the eternal, Esther's only affecting this time-life.

But the *really perfectly sublime* of this condition or state is found only in the Master, who not only wished and desired the good of all, and lived promoting it, but actually died for us; gave life for life, the just for the unjust—redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. Oh for a love of race-kindred like that of Esther; for a love of country like that of David; for a love of souls like that of Christ!—*Raleigh.*

It was with great earnestness and evident marks of affection that Esther urged the king to interpose his authority to prevent the execution of the bloody decree. "She fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears." We have here a bright example of female patriotism. At her first appearance we read of nothing of this kind. Then she was a party concerned,—and, with the dignity which became a queen, and one of an injured and innocent race, she pled her cause, and boldly arraigned the enemy and adversary. But now, her own life having been secured, she appears as an intercessor and advocate for others. Her whole soul was embarked in the cause which she had undertaken—very different from a man of law, or one who engages to act the part of his client for

fee and reward. She "preferred Jerusalem above her chief joy." When her own life was in danger she bent no knee, she shed no tear; but now she weeps and makes supplication, and refuses to rise from the ground unless her people are given at her request. To obtain this there is no humiliation to which she will not submit, no entreaty that she will not employ. She will not separate herself from her kindred, and, like the wife of Phinehas,* cannot think of surviving the destruction of her people. "For how," she exclaims, "can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people, or how shall I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

The true patriot is ready to sacrifice everything for the public weal; he prefers public to personal interests, and would rather die than witness the desolations of the church of God and the ruin of his country. Such was the patriotism of Moses:—"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."† And such was the patriotism of the New Testament Moses, the Apostle Paul: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh;"‡—a passage, the beauty of which is not half seen unless it is compared with the close of the preceding chapter, in which we find the Apostle exulting in the love of God, and declaring his persuasion that nothing could separate him from Christ. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." But what all these things could not do, singly or together, his love for his brethren would have induced him to undergo. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ (separated from his love) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."—*McCrie.*

At no time was Esther more beautiful than when, with tearful eye, at the king's feet, she besought him to pity her brethren. And no prayer of yours will be wafted more acceptably to the heavenly throne than that which, with thankfulness for good you have yourselves received, and pressing, tender desire for the good of others, you present for the salvation of those who will not and cannot pray for themselves.—*Davidson.*

It is a good sign, when we feel an interest in the welfare of those related to us, and when we can with importunity invoke the blessings of God upon them. Thus did Esther. She was not more earnest for herself than for her people. Thus did Jeremiah. "Oh that mine eyes were fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of my people." Thus felt Jesus. "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and *wept* over it." Thus felt St. Paul. He poured out his very soul for his people, the Jews, though they persecuted him, and tried to effect his destruction. He tells us, that he "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" at their folly and wickedness in rejecting Christ, and that his "heart's desire and prayer unto God for them was, that they might be saved."

Brethren, are we thus minded? Esther fell down at the king's feet for her people. Have you done so for your relatives and friends? She wept at the *temporal* ruin which was coming upon them. Have you wept at the *eternal* ruin to which your unbelieving friends are exposed? She said, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Have you said, "My parents are dark and careless, Oh what heaviness I have in my heart on account of their spiritual indifference! My children give no signs of grace. They 'remember not their Creator in the days of their youth,' all remonstrances, admonitions, and persuasions are lost upon them. They *will* have their own way,—'How can I endure the destruction of my children?' Lord enlighten them; Lord,

* 1 Sam. iv. 19. † Exod. xxxii. 32.
‡ Rom. ix. 1—3.

arrest them in their career of sin and folly. Make them, like Obadiah, 'to fear God from their youth.' Deliver them from youthful follies and vanities. Bring them to the Saviour, that they may be among thy ransomed ones for ever. 'Oh that' my children 'might live before thee!'"—*Hughes.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 7, 8.

A MONARCH'S IMBECILITY.

Weak men usually trust to cunning. The lion leaps straight upon its enemy, but the fox has recourse to trick; and so the strong man, who knows his own purpose, boldly faces obstacles; while the weak employ indirect courses. Even an open lie may betray less feebleness of character than the mean evasions to which some men have resort. The one bespeaks a bold bad man, the other reveals a cowardly bad man. As a known enemy is always preferable to a treacherous ally; so the strong but wicked man is to be preferred to the weakling. The great qualities which the former will be likely to possess may win admiration; but the latter will be only despised. The fact is, that the weaker man is at heart as false as the other, but has not the courage to sin boldly. He therefore tries to cheat both God and the devil. The weakness of a weak man is never seen so clearly as after he has committed some palpable error. He does not manfully confess his mistake, but twists and shuffles till he persuades himself that his error was, at worst, a matter of necessity. Always distrust the man who is the *victim of circumstances.* Great men make their circumstances, and little men are made by them. Not unfrequently the path to heaven seems to lead only to a choice of difficulties. Our corrupt hearts and emasculated wills declare that virtue is impossible, and that the only path open to us is one that leads through transgression. When the tradesman smooths over a palpable dishonesty by speaking of the necessities of trade; or when, in times of persecution, the timid confessor throws the incense upon the impious altars of idolatry; they are always ready to excuse the enormity of their sin by the force of the temptation: that is, they say they are tempted of God. But no circumstances can make the good man sin, or the really strong man bend. If, then, we have done evil, let us take our own share of the blame, and not cast it upon our circumstances. Yet circumstances usually make a second sin easier than the first. In that downward path each step is accompanied by an increasing impetus; and thus sins of an enormity to shock the inexperienced become easily possible when other sins have prepared the way. As an army that is once beaten becomes by that very fact more likely to be defeated again, so a man who has once been mastered by temptation will be all the more likely to yield when next he is assailed. Thus Ahasuerus finds that his wicked compliance with Haman has enwrapped him in difficulty. A good man could never have fallen so low; a wise man could never have been so foolish; and a strong man could never have descended to such a monstrous device. He was unable to resist the pleading of Esther; and therefore his course was boldly to disavow his infallibility. Let him convene an assembly of notables, manfully confess his error, and henceforth declare that the laws of Persia could be altered. But this was too brave a course. To confess an error would shake the national respect for authority. He therefore pleads his circumstances, and rather than acknowledge an error, plunges the whole empire in danger of civil war. Even this responsibility he does not fully assume. The weakling throws upon Mordecai the duty of contriving a remedy against his own mistakes.

I. A weak man's self-defence. "I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hands upon the Jews." Even if the whole race of the Hebrews perish, the king had proved his affection

for Esther by endowing her with the wealth, and sacrificing to her the life, of her enemy. Wonderful devotion! He had given what cost him nothing; he had hanged a man of an alien race! Surely these Oriental monarchs prove that "lust dwells hard by hate." His love for Esther was simply a passion which had not yet spent its novel force; and her beauty was rewarded by the life of her foe. Ahasuerus was unworthy of his queenly wife. She is inspired with profound tenderness for her people; and he appeases her patriotism by the execution of a foe. Yet what would the wealth of Haman benefit Esther when her heart was broken for her murdered kinsmen? There are griefs which wealth cannot solace, and which vengeance cannot forget. Better a thousand Hamans alive than one Jew murdered. Yet, clearly, the monarch fancies that Esther will pardon the edict which he has signed because of the punishment which he has meted out. He sees that he has exposed himself to the hatred and contempt of his fair wife by yielding to the devices of Haman, and therefore he offers her the life of her enemy as a proof of his devotion. How much nobler had he said, "Oh, queen, I have weakly allowed myself to be led to the verge of a great wickedness; now that my eyes are open to my folly, I must in some way reverse the decree." But he was too weak. With a maudlin tenderness, like that of a drunken man, while she is inspired with an almost Divine passion of patriotism, he pleads his affection for her person. Surely Esther despised him in her heart. As if it was so easy to forget that he had agreed to murder all her race. Thus we have a great wickedness and a small propitiation. As if the hero of one hundred swindles flung a copper to a beggar; as if a cowardly murderer gave a crust to his victim's orphan; as if a life-long sinner offered to God the compensation of a Sunday prayer; so Ahasuerus hopes that Haman's death will make Esther unmindful of the wickedness devised against her kindred.

II. A weak man's "non possumus." "That which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, may no man reverse." What I have written I have written. Rulers too often say, "Thus I order; let my will stand instead of a reason." Weakness and folly usually turn to obstinacy. He who is easily imposed upon at last takes a determined stand, and usually takes it in the wrong place. The determination of the wise is no way to be feared, for they will yield to right reason; but it requires a surgical operation to make an argument penetrate to the brain of a fool: hence the fool is obstinate, because he cannot understand. States also which take an immoveable stand upon the "wisdom of our ancestors" are in a fair way to ruin. Time is the great innovator, and therefore lapse of time brings vast changes into the body politic; and hence "he that will not apply new remedies, must expect new diseases." So science continually takes new departures; and he who rested in the discoveries of a previous generation, would be the laughing-stock of his own. There is but one unchanging truth,—the revelation of Jesus Christ,—and even that assumes varying aspects. As the sun now draws near and now departs, now is glorious in mid-day, and yet soon leaves us in darkness, while still himself unchanged and, as far as our earth is concerned, unmoved, so our holy religion is compelled to vary with the varying aspects of the times. Only the fool never learns wisdom. So Ahasuerus says, "Take it not amiss that I do not reverse the decree of Haman, for the king's writing stands unaltered for ever."

III. A weak man's refusal of responsibility. "Write ye also for the Jews as it liketh you in the king's name." Having done the mischief, he commits to Mordecai the work of undoing it. Ahasuerus had already had proof of the folly of committing his power to the hands of his minister; but even experience will not make fools wise; he now trusts equal power to Mordecai. Doubtless the king was right in thus committing himself to the skill and loyalty of the new minister; doubtless, also, this minister did the best possible for him to do in the circumstances; but if the king had bestirred himself in a true kingly manner, as already suggested, it would not have been necessary to deluge the land with blood. Few evils are more ruinous to a State than the dread of responsibility. It leads speedily

to anarchy. A monarch who never decides, general who fears to take prompt and vigorous action, a statesman who dares not step beyond the line of musty precedent, are greater curses to a land than even open wickedness. In this world folly and weakness are often punished more severely than sin.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 7, 8.

Ver. 7. *Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.* The king could not grant to Esther everything that she requested. But he assures her, that it was not for want of good will either to herself or to her people that he did not in direct terms reverse the decree procured by Haman. His love to Esther appeared in the rich present of the confiscated estate of Haman. His good wishes to her people appeared in the ignominious death of their capital enemy. But kings cannot do everything. The most noble and potent prince in the world had not the power of rescinding his own decrees, however desirous he might be of undoing foolish things done by himself.

Ver. 8. *Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.* The king himself could not reverse it; and therefore we find that Darius the Mede laboured in vain till the going down of the sun to save Daniel from the lions' den, and passed a miserable sleepless night in the anguish of a fruitless repentance for passing a mischievous law, which he could not abolish. The Persians thought their kings highly honoured in that their decrees were inviolable. But this honour, like some others enjoyed by absolute princes, was a burden too heavy to be borne by mortals. It precluded them from the comforts of repentance, too often necessary for vain men, who, though they would be wise, are born like the wild ass's colt.

The king, therefore, could not give Esther and Mordecai a warrant to pass an act rescissory of his own decrees against the Jews. But he allows them to frame a decree in his name, and to seal it with his ring, for counteracting its effects. As the first decree retained its force, the king could not legally punish those wicked enemies of the Jews, who might take the advantage of it to gratify their malice. Their murders were already legalized by a decree that could not be altered. But a law for the protection of the Jews, which did not rescind the former, might possibly be devised by the wisdom of Mordecai; and to establish such a law the king gave him his ring. He had been too ready on the former occasion to lend his authority; but now he commits it to a safe hand, and under necessary restrictions. He gave his ring to Haman to seal a bloody decree; he now gives it to Mordecai to seal a just and necessary decree for the preservation of many precious lives. The inviolability of the king's decrees, which gave him so much trouble by guarding the wicked laws procured by Haman, would guard the intended decree from violation.—*Lawson.*

It was a fundamental article in the constitution of Persia, that a law once enacted was irrevocable. A most preposterous provision! and worse than preposterous—irrational and unrighteous. Of all the absurdities into which nations have fallen in their systems of legislation, especially where the power is entrusted to the arbitrary will and caprice of a single individual, this is the most absurd — giving perpetuity and effect to every species of injustice and oppression and cruelty, proceeding on the presumptuous assumption of infallibility, and arrogating the right which belongs exclusively to the Supreme Being, who cannot do wrong, all whose enactments are necessarily founded in

truth and rectitude, and "the righteousness of whose testimonies is everlasting." This arrogance of the Persian despots has never been equalled, except by the claim to infallibility set up by "the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." No human authority, civil or sacred, whether exercised singly or collectively, is free from error, and consequently its decisions and enactments must always be subject to review and reversal. Some laws may be morally unalterable, in consequence of their being founded on the eternal principles of rectitude and justice, so that the repeal of them would be unjust and morally wrong; but this does not belong to them simply as human laws, with respect to all of which the maxim of our law holds good—the legislature which enacts can annul.—*McCrie.*

The absurdity of the Persian law, that a decree once passed was unrepealable, has been often commented upon. It has been said that it was the assumption of a prerogative which was to be exercised by God only, and that it rests with him alone to say what can never be altered. But whilst this is true on the side of the Divine infallibility, we have instances in which God provides for the reversal of his threatening and solemn affirmation, when the people, against whom these are made, change in their relation and conduct towards himself. Nineveh was to be destroyed in forty days from the time that the prophet uttered the proclamation in its streets; but when the inhabitants bowed themselves to the earth in deep penitence and humility, the time was allowed to expire without the judgment having been inflicted. But the law of Persia would not have permitted even of this suspended action. It took no account of altered circumstances. By his own act the king rendered himself helpless to defend those who might, as in the case of the Jews, have been hastily and rashly condemned to death. No allowance was made for mistakes in judgment, inadvertence, or what might turn out to be bad legislation. Besides the presumption involved in such a law, as though the king could do no wrong, it must often have led to great injustice and cruelty. What, for example, was Artaxerxes now to do? He would gladly have yielded to Esther's pleading. He clearly apprehended the unrighteousness of the decree which had been issued, and could not fail to look with dismay on the consequences which would result from its being carried into effect. Nevertheless, all that he could do in the face of this pretentious and foolish law was to leave the matter in the hands of Mordecai and Esther to make another edict "as it liketh you," which might not cancel the former one, however much it should have this design, and which, when passed, would be equally irreversible.—*McEwen.*

For ill to man's nature, as it stands perverted, hath a natural motion strongest in continuance; but good, as a forced motion strongest at first. Surely every medicine is an innovation, and he that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator; and if time of course alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel do not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?—*Bacon.*

The greatest tyranny that ever was invented in the world is the pretence of infallibility, for Dionysius and Phalaris did leave the mind free, pretending only to dispose of body and goods according to their will; but the Pope, not content to make us do and say what he pleaseth, will have us also to think so, denouncing his imprecations and spiritual menaces if we do not.—*Isaac Barrow.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 9—14.

EVIL COUNTERACTED.

IN the conduct of life wisdom is often as necessary as virtue; hence our Lord commands his followers to be wise as serpents, while they are harmless as doves. Indeed folly will ruin an earthly career as effectually as vice. Thus to have a good cause, and to fight manfully for it, are not sufficient in any conflict: the general needs skill in the arrangement of his troops, and also a sharp eye to discern his enemy's mistakes. Equally in the battle of life we need the open eye, as well as the strong hand, or the brave heart. It is only folly which says, that, as God is righteous, and must therefore be on the side of the righteous, righteousness alone is necessary for success. This may be true on that large scale which takes eternity into the account, but here upon earth it is not true. As our supreme Judge requires at our hands the cultivation of the intellectual as well as of the moral attributes of our nature, he wisely makes much of our earthly success dependent on our skill. Thus a righteous imbecile will often fail, where a skilful scoundrel succeeds. In the case of nations this principle is even more conspicuous. Nations have no hereafter. They are judged here and now. An individual may be righteous and miserable; but a nation must be exalted by virtue. So manifestly is this principle written on the pages of history, that one of the leading philosophers of our century does not scruple to write "The cause which succeeds is that which has deserved to succeed." It follows, that in matters of legislation wisdom and righteousness are almost synonymous; but if we could imagine a ruler who was himself utterly immoral, while yet his large intellect guided him wisely in national affairs, such a monster would yet prove a blessing to his country. At times, however, the folly and wickedness of the legislature are equally conspicuous. When most European nations oppressed the Jews; when Spain so cruelly drove out the industrious Moors; or when France expelled those Huguenots who were the very brain and heart of her middle classes, it seems wonderful that no one propagated the maxim, that "What is morally wrong can never be politically expedient." In times like these a statesman who is both wise and righteous finds a noble opportunity. It is for him to resist the passions of the mob, to devise means whereby the oppressed may be relieved, and to open a highway leading to the fair fields of national greatness. Such was the work now committed to Mordecai. It was his part to undo the folly of the monarch and the wickedness of the minister. Ahasuerus committed to him the task of reversing the mischief devised by Haman the Agagite.

I. **A sudden decree.** The right of self-defence, which in some aspects of it may be called a sacred inheritance, is generally held in abeyance in civilized states. If every man defended himself from attack, and was the avenger of his own wrongs, society would become impossible. This right is usually yielded up to the government; yet there are always extreme cases, in which this right reverts back to the original owner. So the laws allow of homicide when a burglar, within the house at night, threatens the life of a peaceful inhabitant; or if a traveller, assailed by a garotter, with the first weapon which comes to hand inflicts a fatal wound, he would usually be held guiltless. In England homicide is said to be justifiable: (α) To prevent the commission of a crime which, when committed, would be punishable with death; and also (β) In necessary endeavours to carry the law into execution, as in suppressing riots, or apprehending malefactors. Probably, also, the defence of chastity, which approaches nearest to the preservation of life, would be held to justify the same extremities. Now with men of a western race, at least with men of the brave Teutonic stock, there would be no need to say to those

whose lives were assailed that they might defend their right to live. Possibly however, with sleepy Orientals, oppressed with a sense of the magnitude of the empire, there might be some occasion for a stirring decree. Remembering how cheaply men will sell their lives in China, it seems not improbable that the sentence of Haman would strike the Jews into a dull stupor, from which they needed to be aroused. Yet the decree granted much more than this. It gave first the right of association. When the Jews banded together in armed companies, no heathen ruler of a province could compel them to disarm. Hence, when the fatal day arrived they were ready for their foes. History records, that after the Huguenots had met their foes in battle on many a hard-fought field, they fell a prey to secret and solitary assassination: thus the grand old Coligni, who had no equal on the field, was ruthlessly murdered in his own chamber. From this danger the Jews were delivered. Thanks to the decree, on the thirteenth day of Adar the Jews were able to say to their foes, the motto of the Napiers, "Ready, ay, Ready." Then, secondly, the decree was an act of indemnification. No Jew, who slew his foe in self-defence, need fear that he would have to give an account in the courts of justice. Those who were killed were beforehand pronounced justly killed. There was also a third result doubtless contemplated by Mordecai. No one would die who did not deserve to die, because, after this decree, no one would attack the Jews who was not madly animated with the love of blood and plunder. Orderly citizens would keep the peace; but the sequel shows how terribly Haman had aroused the passions of the mob. No foe so terrible as an excited mob; it resembles that herd of swine possessed by the unclean spirit. One passion, one soul, one wild spirit seems to animate the mass; and the vile mobs of Persia rushed violently upon their own ruin.

II. A royal sanction. Even in the records of Oriental imbecility, it may be doubted whether ever monarch betrayed more besotted folly. How different the records of the East, where one benevolent imbecile succeeds to another bloated sensualist, from the picture painted by our poet Laureate. He tells how statesmen knew how to make the bounds of freedom wider yet, by shaping some august decree, and how freedom widened slowly down from precedent to precedent. Oriental despotism is a pyramid on its apex. As if the monarch were some Epicurean deity, who was wrapt up in selfishness, but could curse all mankind, the whole multitude of the nation living for his glory or for his luxury. In a lively apologue, a domestic bird moralizes on his own importance. For him suns rise and set; for him tides ebb and flow; to provide for his comfort the race of men exist; and thus the whole universe is employed catering for the happiness of one exalted goose So Oriental monarchs fancy that they are the world. But the theory that the world is governed by kings and statesmen begins to fade away. The country belongs to the people who have made it, and not to the monarch who has been accidentally uplifted above his fellows. Every child has a right to happiness; has a right to an education; has a right to that career which suits his talents; and has a right to a voice in the affairs of state. The state is the private property, the exclusive manor, of no class of men whatever; and the world will not be at rest till this principle is everywhere confessed. Again, also, we must raise our cry against the folly which will not confess a mistake. Not to sin is the noblest lot; and next to that, whether for a nation or a man, is the bold virtue which dares to make restitution. Having taken a wrong position, Christianity demands that we retreat from it as soon as the mistake is discovered.

III. Swift messengers. Bad news proverbially travels fast; and so it is related that, after the Indian Mutiny, long before the tidings could possibly have reached England, strange rumours were current in London—rumours, alas, far surpassed by the real truth. Here good news travels fast, being hastened by the king's commandment. The haste was demanded (a) in order to relieve the suspense of the Jews. Suspense paralyzes all exertion, and indeed a stunning defeat may be less

injurious than long-continued anxiety. To the Jews these tidings would come like cold waters to the thirsty soul. When a vessel has been long becalmed beneath a sultry sky, when the slimy ocean has grown stagnant, and when no evening dews moisten the cracking timbers; or when the travellers of the desert have long been lost, when the cheeks are sunken, and the lips blackened by the continued thirst; let a cloud arise, and streams of rain descend, then men realize the sweetness of good news from a far country. Now, over all that mighty empire the Jew would see that God had not forgotten his covenant, but that he was still mindful of his chosen people Israel. From the banks of India's mighty rivers, away across the deserts as far as the mountains of Rasselas, the cry would be heard, When the Lord turned again the captivity of Israel, we were like them that dream. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them, whereof they are glad. * (β) This haste was required in order that the Jews might have full time to prepare. Lest the first decree should take effect, the people must have opportunity to concert schemes of self-defence. In the presence of so overwhelming a disaster as that with which they were threatened, solitary effort availed nothing. Union alone was strength. (γ) This haste also was a merciful warning to all the heathen. Before they were fairly aroused by the messengers of Haman they were admonished by the decree of Mordecai. To the more distant provinces we can fancy the messengers of mercy speeding onward, if haply they may overtake and pass by the messengers of death. So England to-day in her right hand carries to China the deadly opium, and then sends afterward swift messengers of mercy to preach the Gospel. Possibly, in the eyes of the all-wise God the folly of Ahasuerus, perched on his infallibility, is no greater than the folly of Britain murdering a whole empire for the sake of revenue. At least we may pray that the messengers of the modern Mordecai may undo the evil devised by the modern Haman.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 9—14.

Now in the change wrought in Providence on the condition of the Jews, as well as in the work which was yet imposed upon them before they could deliver themselves from their enemies and establish themselves in the enjoyment of their own liberties and privileges, we have an illustration of God's working *in grace*. He accomplishes for us in his grace what we could not do for ourselves. The Jews scattered throughout the Persian empire had no part in securing this second decree of the king. Though they had loudly protested against the cruel wrong which was being done to themselves and their families, yet would it all have gone for nothing; and had not the second decree been passed, apart altogether from their interference, they should all have perished when the day fixed had arrived. It came to them not as an achievement of their own, but simply as a gift. Whilst, however, it threw around them the favour and protection of the king, and did for them what they could not have done for themselves, yet had they to confront and beat down all the enemies who should rise up against them, and virtually gain a victory for themselves. They had to fight in the king's name, and with the king's weapons, and under the king's mandate. The conquest was sure, but the battle might yet be severe. In like manner has God done for us, in Christ, what we could never have done for ourselves. We have in him pardon, reconciliation, and unmerited grace. We have in him the victory. But still have we to "fight the good fight of faith," and to battle against every enemy who should seek our soul's ruin. If it had not been for our deed of emancipation and salvation accomplished for us by Christ, when we were ignorant of it, and could have done nothing to forward or finish it, we should never have striven against our enemies, or had only struggled in vain. But on account of what has been done for us we have to be ready against our evil day, to be equipped in the armour of God, and to contend

against our enemies in the King's name and by his authority. There is not an evil passion or lust against which we are not called upon to do battle, not a temptation which we are not commanded to resist, not a spiritual adversary which we are not required to put forth all our energies to overcome. In our "evil day" we are summoned by our King to "stand for our lives," and be prepared to war against our enemies as though the victory lay with ourselves. God helping us, we will do it! The issues are tremendous. The contention is not simply for the life of the body, but of the soul. Against our immortal life is every fiery dart levelled. The spoil which they would take from us is nothing short of our faith and hope in God, our security in Christ and preparedness for heaven. Let the people of God be always apprehensive of the "evil day," and be ready on the instant to "stand for their lives." The victory is theirs if they will only earnestly contend for it. Yield not an inch of ground. "No mercy!" is the war-cry of the foe. Man, woman, little ones, and spoil, must all be taken. "No surrender!" be our war-cry in reply. Everything saved, nothing lost. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."—*McEwen.*

"The posts were hastened by the king's commandment."—He was now made sensible of the great wrong he had done to the Jews, and made all possible haste to undo, as far as he could undo, what he had done. Are you sensible you have done wrong? Make haste, and delay not to repair the wrong, if it is in your power. How can you say that you repent of the evil that you have done, if you hold it fast? The light of nature teaches men that they ought, with the first opportunity, to put away the evil of their doings, and to redress the injuries done by their hands, or their tongues, or their pens. As soon as Jesus brought salvation to the house of Zaccheus, he said, "Lord, if I have wronged any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." Is it your intention, in some future part of your life, to compensate the wrongs you have done in the former part of it? But are you sure that you shall see another week, or even another day? Boast not thyself of to-morrow, unless a prophet of as much credit as Isaiah has brought a message from God, that some more years of life are allotted you.—*Lawson.*

The decree was given in the month Sevan, "the month of May," says an old author, "when all things are in their prime and pride, and the earth chequered and entrailed with variety of flowers, and God is seen to be *magnus in minimis*—great in the smallest creatures. Then did the Sun of righteousness arise to these afflicted exiles with healing in his wings, like as the sunbeams did to the dry and cold earth, calling out the herbs and flowers, and healing those deformities that winter had brought upon it."—*Quoted by Dr. Raleigh.*

If such anxiety was manifested for this newly-enacted law to be known throughout the empire, how much more anxious should we be to circulate the word of God throughout the world? If it was deemed so important that the Jews should know that they were allowed to withstand their enemies, how much more so is it that mankind should be informed of the strength and craftiness of their spiritual adversaries, of the armour with which they are to be clothed, and of the great Captain of salvation, under whose banners they shall crush them all, and enjoy the fruits of victory in the kingdom of heaven for ever! And if it was deemed of such moment that the decree should be "written unto every people, after their language," how should we rejoice that the great charter of salvation has been translated into so many of the languages of the earth, and that a copy of the Scriptures goeth forth into distant parts of the world for every moment that passeth away! May these Divine writings be blessed to the hastening of the reign of Christ, "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same!"—*Hughes.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 15—17.

DAYS OF REJOICING.

AFTER a dark and stormy night, when the clouds have hidden every star, and the fierce winds have been howling over hill and dale, what gladness fills all animated nature as the sun arises in the East. He floods the valleys with his cheerful light, and kindles a blaze of glory upon the mountain-tops. Then the thief and assassin, with every unclean and loathsome creature, seek their hiding-place; then the honest artisan goes forth to his task until the evening; and then sweet concerts are heard in every grove. So after the days of national gloom came the morning of gladness to the Jews. Man's extremity once again proved to be God's opportunity. As when the breath of heaven sweeps onward through the open sky, and meets there with an easy reception, it creates little commotion; but when it meets the strength of a forest, the same wind grows mighty, and dwells there till it compels the tall trees to bow, and yield a triumphant passage over the top of all their glories. So in days of quiet, men pass easily along, and are barely conscious of the presence of God; but when affliction or persecution ariseth because of the Word, then God wonderfully interferes to save his chosen people, and even his foes are constrained to cry, "Galilean, thou hast conquered." So had Jehovah vindicated the rights of his people, and compelled even the heathen to acknowledge that his ways were wonderful. Days can never be so dark but that the sun may burst through the cloud; our difficulties can never be so great but that our Master can lift us above them all; and often "where sin has made a difficulty, grace has made a triumph." Now Haman's devices end in the exaltation of Mordecai, and the threatened destruction of the Jews leads directly to the enlargement of their nation.

I. Honour paid to a wise minister. The once despised Mordecai now issues from the palace clothed in royal apparel, and wearing a crown of gold. It is not always that a wise minister wins national honour. Every age has seen examples of great statesmen hurled from power by the vices of the great, or by the folly of the crowd. But happy is that country in which the poor wise man is not despised. (*α*) Such a man, placed at the head of the state, will not be blinded by personal vices. Frequently the dearest interests of a nation have been sacrificed to the luxury of the minister; but a man of virtue will always be on the watch for opportunities to serve his generation. (*β*) A great statesman, again, will not be biassed by selfish motives. To increase his own wealth or prestige, to promote the prosperity of family or party, or to injure the power of a rival, are desires never cherished in such a breast. It should be easier to turn the sun from his path than a statesman from the path of duty. (*γ*) A great statesman will recognize the supremacy of virtue. The will of God is his supreme law, and his final reward is the approval of that unseen Master. (*δ*) A great minister, once more, will live for the welfare of others. To raise the fallen, to vindicate the oppressed, to afford an asylum to the slave, to increase the food of the poor, to care for the education of the child, and to promote the glory of God—such is the noble vocation of a truly wise minister of state.

II. A nation rejoicing under the good minister's shadow. "The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honour." The Jews had (*α*) the joy of deliverance. The poet Spenser writes:—

> Ease after war, port after stormy seas,
> Rest after toil, death after life, doth greatly please.

So there is always joy in a sudden change from danger to safety. As a gentle mother prepares pleasant surprises for her child, so God's providence frequently

delights his people with a sudden change of prospect; and he who was in darkness now finds the light doubly precious. There was also (β) the joy of safety. The danger was not only postponed, but removed. Hitherto they had lived as strangers in a strange land, liable at any time to plots like those of Haman. Such has been the history of the Jews in every nation under heaven. Now, at least for a time, they were safe under the shadow of Esther the queen, and Mordecai the statesman. Every history tells how the liability to a crushing disaster unsettles the morals of a people, and drives men headlong into vice. Every man knows, also, from his own experience, how completely a sense of insecurity detracts from happiness. Hitherto the Jews had been like a man stood on a narrow plank over a yawning chasm. A false step, a sudden breeze, or a weak spot in the board, will precipitate him into the abyss. But now the Jews were standing on a massive rock, and were able to look back on the danger from which they were escaped. (γ) They had also the joy and honour of large accessions. A man's faith redoubles in intensity when he can persuade others to believe it; and the Jews' confidence in their national glory would wonderfully increase when they saw the heathen offering themselves as converts to the true faith.

III. The triumph of religion. "Many of the people of the land became Jews." So always wise rulers may be as nursing fathers to the Church. Multitudes are led by the example of the great; many may be only influenced by the desire for worldly prosperity, and some will be genuine converts. Without the imputation of any sinister motives, two valid reasons can be assigned for this sudden development of Judaism. (α) Many are influenced only by visible signs. Now this wonderful interposition of providence on behalf of the Jews would be to many a sufficient proof that God was on their side. (β) Others, of a nobler sort, might first hear of Judaism as a power in the State through the very tumults excited by Haman. They would then inquire into the history and claims of this strange religion, and become convinced of its truth. Thus the wrath of man is made to praise God.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 15—17.

This narrative may teach us that in the darkest and most unpromising circumstances there is nearly always *some* way of relief and improvement. How seldom are things so in human life that literally nothing can be done! There is *something* unrepealable in all important human action. But there is also much that may be practically repealed. I think we may say that never, at any one time, in the history of a nation; never, in the life of an individual, are things so dark and bad that nothing can be done to amend and lighten them. On the contrary, this world, and the social and individual spheres of it, this whole mundane system, is constructed on the plan, so to say, of admitting, suggesting, prompting to, and furnishing, the means of continual recovery.

If this were not so, the world would soon be full of the most pitiable spectacles that could be conceived; communities and individuals sitting hopelessly amid the gloom of their own failures, amid the consequences of their own mistakes, amid the deepening unhappiness arising from the memory of their own sins—the strokes of penalty heard resounding on every side, the waters of misery rising silently and coldly within, while the long night of despair is deepening and settling without. Such pictures are not to be seen. There is indeed much suffering in the world; some of it penalty, and much of it not. And there are all kinds of calamities, and mischances, and unexpected and unsuspected griefs, and things that ought never to have happened, and things which fill you with sympathy, and pain, and profound regret, and perhaps indignation, as soon as you know them. And there are many mournful people who make the worst of them; or shall we say the best of them, for they really

seem to find a kind of dismal enjoyment in seeing how bad they are, and in anticipating that they are going to be still worse.

But who knows not, also, that calamities and misfortunes are retrieved, that injuries are redressed, that mistakes are rectified? Who knows not that oppressions come to an end, and bloody wars, and other evil works? Yes, and those things are accomplished sometimes just when everything appears almost hopeless, and by means which do not seem at all sufficient or equal to the end.—*Raleigh.*

The joy felt by the Jews was greatly enhanced by the distress into which they had lately been plunged, and by the suddenness and strangeness of the transition. They felt like a sick man at the point of death, when he hears the voice, Deliver from going down to the pit; or like a criminal expecting the hour of his execution, when a pardon is put into his hand. They felt like their fathers when the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion; "they were like them that dream; their mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing." And such, my friends, will be the feelings of the ransomed of the Lord, when they shall come to the heavenly Zion; the recollection of all that they have suffered here shall only serve to accent their happiness, and convert it into a joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The deliverances experienced in time by the Church and people of Jehovah are earnests of that felicity and glory which shall be enjoyed in the future world. But they are also productive of benefits in this life, which make them sources of joy and thanksgiving to all well-affected minds. Besides confirming weak disciples, and adding alacrity to the strong, they are often blessed for making converts, and inducing strangers to join themselves to the people of God Thus it is written, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."*

These promises were partly fulfilled in consequence of the visible interposition of Divine providence, on the occasion referred to in the text. "Many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." They became proselytes to the Jewish religion (for no other meaning can be applied to the words, when the Jews were foreigners), renounced idolatry, and worshipped the true God. "When the Church prospers, and is smiled upon," says a pious commentator, "many will come into it that will be shy of it when it is in trouble." But we must not altogether despise such conversions. Though nothing but willing and cordial submission will advantage the souls of individuals, God can glorify himself, and Christ is glorified in the "professed subjection" of men. "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me;" or, as it is in the margin, "shall yield feigned obedience unto me."† Not fear, but love, is the principle of genuine and evangelical obedience. But the Spirit of God makes use of the natural principle of fear, in awakening persons to a concern about salvation. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation," was an apostolical exhortation; and among the effects produced by the preaching and miracles of the primitive Church, this is particularly specified, that "fear came upon every soul;" and again, "great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things;" after which it follows, "and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Amen.—*McCrie.*

Who could have believed that the

* Isa. xiv. 1.

† Ps. xviii. 43, 44.

contrivances of Haman for the destruction of the Jews would have terminated in the increase of their nation? The lovers of the name of the God of Israel would tremble at Haman's devices, lest the name of Israel should be put out, and the worship of the God of Israel should be extirpated from the earth. But the revolution of a few weeks convinced them that their God was the same God that he had ever been; and that wherein his enemies dealt proudly, he was still above them. Death and destruction are in the hand of the Lord, and he can make them instrumental for the life, and for bringing about the safety, of his people. "Before him darkness becomes light, and sorrow is turned into joy. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and carrieth the devices of the froward headlong. So the poor have hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth."—*Lawson.*

And many of the people of the land became Jews.—That is, they were proselyted, professing the Jewish religion, and siding with them; some in sincerity, doubtless, and some out of sinisterity, and for self-respects, because they saw the king favoured them, the queen and Mordecai were altogether with them and for them. So that mixed multitude (Exod. xii. 38), moved with miracles, removed out of Egypt with the Israelites, took hold of the skirts of these Jews and said, "We will go with you." So in David's days, whilst he dealt prudently and prospered, so that he became the head of the heathen, a people whom he had not known submitted themselves unto him. The like they did in Solomon's days, as Josephus relateth, as also that the people were then very careful how they received such prosperity-proselytes. So, many strangers followed the captives returning out of Babylon under the conduct of Zerubbabel; and many heathens joined themselves to the Christian congregations under Constantine, the first Christian emperor. The Huns, well-beaten by the Christians, concluded that their God was the true God, and received the gospel. Thus, whether it be in pretence or in truth (as St. Paul hath it) that people come in, God is glorified and his Church amplified, and the saints therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.—*Trapp.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1, 2. *Advantage of change.* As Gotthold was examining with delight some double pinks, which at the time were in full blossom, he was told by the gardener that the same plants had in former years borne only single flowers, but that they had been improved and beautified by repeated transplantations, and that in the same manner a change of soil increases the growth and accelerates the bearing of a young tree. This reminded Gotthold that the same happens to men. Many a man who at home would scarcely have borne single flowers, when transplanted by Divine Providence abroad, bears double ones; another, who, if rooted in his native soil, would never have been more than a puny twig, is removed to a foreign clime, and there spreads far and wide his luxuriant boughs, and bears fruit to the delight of all. We may also notice that, as the plant, so the man must have the capacity of bearing fruits and flowers. Esther and Mordecai were fruit-bearing in lowly spheres, and then being placed in high positions they brought forth more fruit. Through them light and gladness came to all the Jews.

Vers. 1, 2. *Prosperity not suitable for every man.* Great skill is required to the governing of a plentiful and prosperous estate, so as it may be safe and comfortable to the owner, and beneficial to others. Every corporal may know how to order some few files, but to marshal many troops in a regiment in a whole body of an army requires the skill of an experienced general. As for prosperity, every man thinks himself wise and able enough to know how to govern it, and himself in it. A happy estate, we imagine, will easily manage itself, without too much care. Give me but sea-room, saith the confident mariner, and let me alone, whatever tempests arise. Surely the great Doctor of the Gentiles had never made this holy boast of his divine skill, "I know how to abound," if it had been so easy a matter as the world conceives it. Mere ignorance and want of self-experience is guilty of this error.

Mordecai had shown himself possessed of great

skill in the management of small affairs, therefore it was fitting that he should be promoted over the house of Haman, and to the principal position in the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

Signet rings. On the little finger of the right hand is worn a seal-ring, which is generally of silver, with a cornelian, or other stone, upon which is engraved the wearer's name: the name is accompanied by the words, "His servant" (signifying, the servant, or worshipper, of God), and often by other words expressive of the person's trust in God, etc. The seal-ring is used for signing letters and other writings, and its impression is considered more valid than the sign-manual. (Therefore, giving the ring to another person is the utmost sign of confidence.) A little ink is dabbed upon it with one of the fingers, and it is pressed upon the paper; the person who uses it having first touched his tongue with another finger and moistened the place in the paper which is to be stamped. Almost every person who can afford it has a seal-ring, even though he be a servant.—*Biblical Museum.*

Ver. 3. *Honesty in little things.* One of the kings of Persia, who is famous in history for his exact justice, was once out hunting, when, finding himself hungry, he ordered the people to dress a deer that they had just taken. When all was nearly ready, they found that they had forgotten to bring any salt with them, so they sent a lad off to fetch some from a village at a little distance. The king overheard them, and, calling to the boy, said, "And mind you take money to pay for it." The attendants expressed their surprise at his thinking of such trifles, and asked what harm there could be in taking a handful of salt. The king replied, "All the evil that now troubles the earth first began in such trifles, till by degrees it grew to its present height; and if I take the salt, my officers will perhaps seize the cow."

"To put away the mischief of Haman" as it had now reached its climax was difficult. Great evil would have been prevented had Haman in the first instance put away the mischief that was brooding in his heart.

Ver. 5. *Ask and receive.* Sir Walter Raleigh one day asking a favour from Queen Elizabeth, the latter said to him, "Raleigh, when will you leave off begging?" To which he answered, "When your Majesty leaves off giving." Ask great things of God; expect great things from God; let his past goodness make us "instant in prayer." Esther kept on begging till she had secured a position of security for her countrymen. So great was her earnestness that she besought even in tears. Not for herself, but for her country she now prayed to the king. She was an earnest and powerful intercessor. Not so powerful, however, as the great Intercessor; he is a more powerful Pleader, and he approaches a more powerful and more liberal King, even the King of heaven.

Ver. 6. *Patriotism.* A Corsican gentleman, who had been taken prisoner by the Genoese, was thrown into a dark dungeon, where he was chained to the ground. While he was in this dismal situation, the Genoese sent a message to him, that if he would accept a commission in their service, he might have it. "No," said he; "were I to accept your offer, it would be with a determined purpose to take the first opportunity of returning to the service of my country. But I would not have my countrymen even to suspect that I could be one moment unfaithful." Esther in the same spirit asks, How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Patriot's duty. When Burnet first began to grow eminent in his profession of the law, he went down to visit his father in Wiltshire. One day, as they were walking in the fields together, the father observed to him that men of his profession were apt to stretch the prerogative of the Crown too far, and injure liberty; but charged him, if he ever came to any eminence in his profession, never to sacrifice the laws and liberty of his country to his own interest or the will of his prince. He repeated this twice, and immediately fell into a fit of apoplexy, of which he died in a few hours; and this advice had so lasting an influence upon the son that he ever after observed and pursued it. Esther preferred the interests of her country before her own aggrandisement.

Spartan patriotism. A Lacedæmonian mother had five sons in a battle that was fought near Sparta, and, seeing a soldier that had left the scene of action, eagerly inquired of him how affairs went on. "All your five sons are slain," said he. "Unhappy wretch!" replied the woman; "I ask thee not of what concerns my children, but of what concerns my country." "As to that, all is well," said the soldier. "Then," said she, "let them mourn that are miserable. My country is prosperous, and I am happy."

Esther wept over the sorrows of her country, and could not rest till she saw her countrymen delivered from impending dangers.

Disinterested loyalty. After the battle of Ivry, Henry IV. of France, being very much in want of money, asked one of his most trusty courtiers where he could procure some. The courtier mentioned a rich merchant's wife, who was a zealous royalist. The monarch in disguise immediately accompanied his courtier on his visit to the lady, Madame le Clerc, who received them with great hospitality, and congratulated them on the success of the king's arms. "Alas, madam," replied the courtier, "to what purpose are all our victories? We are in the greatest distress imaginable. His Majesty has no money to pay his troops; they threaten to revolt and join the League. Mayenne will triumph at last." "Is it possible?" exclaimed Madame le Clerc; "but I hope that will not afflict our sovereign, and that he will find new resources in the loyalty of his subjects." She then quitted the room, but soon returned with several bags of gold, which she presented, saying, "This is all I can do at present. Go and relieve the king from his anxiety. I wish him all the success and happiness he deserves. Tell him to be confident that he reigns in the hearts of his subjects, and that my life and fortune are, and ever will be, at his disposal." The king could no longer

conceal his incognito. "Generous woman," he cried, "my friend has no occasion to go far to tell his Majesty the excellence of your heart, here he stands before you, and is a witness to it. Be assured that the favour will be indelibly engraven on the heart of your prince." From that time success attended the king, and when he was master of the capital, and safely seated on the throne, he sent for Madame le Clerc, and, presenting her to a full and brilliant court, said, "You see this lady, who is a true friend of mine. To her I owe all the successes of my last campaigns. It was she who lent me money to carry on the war when the troops threatened to abandon me."

Mordecai and Esther were loyal both to King Ashasuerus and to the race of the Jews. Haman's fall was a blessing both to the king and to the nation. The extermination of the Jews would have been a great disaster.

Ver. 10. *Sealing letters.* The authenticity of a merchant's letters, as of his bills, depends entirely upon the seal. It is not usual to sign either; and they are not often written in the hand of the person who sends them; so that it is the seal which is of importance. Engraven upon it is the name and title, if he has one, of the person it belongs to, and the date when it was cut. The occupation of seal-cutter is one of much trust and some danger: he keeps a register of every seal he makes, and if one is stolen or lost by the party to whom he sold it, his life would answer for the crime of making another exactly the same. The person to whom it belongs, if in business, is obliged to take the two most respectable witnesses of the occurrence, and to write to his correspondents, declaring all accounts and business with his former seal null from the day upon which it was lost.—*Biblical Museum.*

Cheerful and beautiful for Christ. While your religion is impressive by its consistency, let it be attractive by its amiableness. Therefore, think upon and pursue whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. In excuse for the disagreeable tempers and the repulsive manners of some Christians, it is said that grace may be grafted on a crab-stock. Be it so. But instead of excusing the improprieties, the metaphor condemns. When a tree *is* grafted, it is always expected to bear fruit according to the scion, and not according to the stock: and "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Nothing commends godliness more than cheerfulness. All men desire happiness; and if, while every other candidate for the prize fails, you succeed, your success may determine others to follow your envied course. Hence it is not very desirable that religion should be so often expressed by the word "seriousness." Among many people, as soon as ever a man has become religious, it is said he is becoming "serious." But does not religion also make him humble, and benevolent, and hopeful, and blessed? Why, then, should we select so exclusively for the designation of its influence an attribute or an effect which is common with many others, but yet the least inviting, and most liable to an injurious construction? I never use it; and if I were obliged to use any other term than religion itself, I would rather say the man was becoming happy.—*Wm. Jay.*

The Jews here had joy and honour. The Christian should always be in this condition.

Ver. 17. *House of joy.*

I see a forest, dark, dim, deep, and dread,
Whose solemn shades no human foot or eye
Can penetrate; but now, oh, see! a veil
Falls from my strengthened eyes; and now
Even in its deepest centre I behold
A spot more beautiful than human heart
Can comprehend; it is the home of joy;
And there the blessed spirit broods for ever,
Making her dwelling-place a heaven; there
The skies are pure as crystal, and the eye
Looks through their clear expanse direct to God.
No sun is there; the air itself is light
And life; a rainbow spans it like a crown
Of tearless glory, and the forest trees
Sweep round it in a belt of living green.
Colour, that wayward sprite of changeful mien,
Is here subdued to an intensity
Of burning lustre. Sound has but one voice,
And that is joyous song; sight but one object,
And that is happiness; mine eyes are strained
To catch the lineaments of the bright queen
Whose dwelling-place I see; but 'tis in vain;
Nowhere distinct, yet felt in all, she glides,
A shape of light and colour, through the air,
Making its pure transparency to thrill
With the soft music of her viewless step.

Reddal.

A feast and a good day. These Jews had a feast and a good day, for they were delivered from the fear of their enemies. But surely we may go further, and picture them rejoicing because the righteous are vindicated, and the holy ones are now delivered from the hand of the oppressor. The nation may well rejoice when the righteous are exalted. God often gives to his people on earth a feast and a good day. Every Sabbath should be such a day. Every good day on earth should be a type of the unending feast and uninterrupted good day of heaven. And how transcendent the glory of that world where there shall be no more sin or imperfection, where we all unite in the song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" "The glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The idolatrous temple of Diana was so bright and splendid that the door-keeper always cried to them that entered it, "Take heed to your eyes." But what faculties of vision must we have to behold the glory of the temple above! If it is said that the righteous themselves shall shine forth as the sun, what will be the splendour of the Eternal Throne! What a delightful change from this world of darkness and imperfection to that where all shall be light and glory!

Ver. 8. *Know and the king's edict.* Here, a second time in the history of Artaxerxes, we

have a proof of the felt inconvenience of that law, which despotism itself could not set aside. Gladly would the king be a party to the practical defeating of the object of it; but in its literal acceptation it must stand.

It is said that something like the principle of the unchangeableness of the purposes of the kings of Persia has been preserved in that country even till recent times. And a circumstance may be here alluded to in illustration of this, which although somewhat strange and almost ludicrous, yet does bear some resemblance to the difficulty in which Artaxerxes felt himself placed between the unalterable law, and the willingness which he displayed at the same time to get quit of the obligation to observe it literally. A Persian king, who reigned not very many years ago (Aga Mahmed Khan), having set out upon a military expedition, and encamped in a place convenient for his purpose, gave forth his edict that the encampment should not be removed until the snow had disappeared from the neighbouring mountains. The season was severe. The snow clung to the mountains longer than usual, and in the mean time the army became straitened for supplies. Here was an unexpected difficulty. The king's appointment must stand, out the result was likely to be ruinous. To avert the difficulty, then, a vast multitude of labourers were despatched to clear away as far as they could the snow that was visible from the camp; and with their aid, and the help of a few days of sunshine, the snow disappeared, and then immediately the army was put in motion.—*Davidson.*

CHAPTER IX.

CRITICAL NOTES.] The Jews destroy their enemies, and at Mordecai's request establish the festival of Purim. **1. In the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the same, the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities,** &c.] Several parenthetical clauses succeed this definition of time, so that the statement of what then took place does not follow till ver. 2.—*Keil.* These clauses state the meaning of the day just named, and give a general notice of the conflict between the Jews and their enemies. The word translated "when" may be here taken as the accusative of time, in which, or where, the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put into execution, *i. e.* in which the king's word and law should be carried out. The day was changed from a day of misfortune to a day of prosperity for the Jews. "On the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have the mastery over them, and it was changed (*i. e.* the contrary occurred), that the Jews had the mastery over them that hated them." **2. For the fear of them fell upon all the people**] A general terror spread from a feeling that the Jews were the special favourites of the most high God; and while this feeling disheartened and unnerved their enemies, it gave inspiration and power to the Jews. We may naturally suppose that Jewish antipathy and anger would, at least in some cases, lead them to assault their foes, and that the Jews would not remain wholly on the defensive. **3.**] All the princes, the satraps, and governors, and also other persons of rank whom it is unnecessary here to name (comp. chap. iii. 9), assisted the Jews. Rawlinson says this is very important. It has been stated that, according to the narrative of Esther, the Jews were allowed to kill 75,000 Persians, and this (supposed) feature of the narrative has been pronounced incredible. The present verse shows that the real Persians, who formed the standing army which kept the empire in subjection, and were at the disposal of the various governors of the provinces, took the Jews' side. Their enemies were almost entirely to be found among the idolatrous people of the subject nations, for whose lives neither the Persians generally nor their monarchs cared greatly. **4. For Mordecai was great in the king's house** (was much esteemed by the king), **and his fame went through all the provinces: for this man Mordecai became continually greater.**] **6. In Shushan the palace the Jews slew . . . five hundred**] Shushan the palace is here evidently to be taken in the sense of the place or city of the palace, equivalent to *in* or *at Shushan*, as in ver. 15. It is not to be supposed that the work of slaughter was carried on within the palace itself. —*Whedon's Com.* **7—9.**] These names of Haman's ten sons are written in Hebrew MSS. in perpendicular columns, and it is said that the reader in the synagogue is required to pronounce them all at one breath. The Targum says they were all suspended, one above another, upon one cross, fifty cubits high, which Mordecai had prepared for the purpose. Most of these names are of Persian origin, a fact which has great weight in showing the genuineness of the Book of Esther.—*Whedon's Com.* Jewish rabbis have found these names indicative of a representative importance, and have taken the individual traits to mean something prophetic. **10. On the spoil laid they not their hand**] To show that they only sought the safety of their own lives, and had no desire to enrich themselves by the goods of their fallen foes. **12.**] If the Jews had killed five hundred men in Susa, how many may they not have slain in other parts of the kingdom? The king recognises the fact that, if the Jews had to do with so many opponents, they could hardly have mastered them.

and even now great danger threatened them on the part of those remaining, if they could not hunt down such in their hiding-places, and destroy them utterly. **13. To do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree**] This request of Esther has been pronounced the offspring of a blood-thirsty vengeance, and desire to have another day for the butchery of enemies. But what was "this day's decree" which the queen desired to be continued another day? Merely "to stand for their life" against all that would assault them. Hence we infer that the queen believed, or had reason to suspect, that the enemies of the Jews in Shushan would renew the attack upon the following day. So fearfully enraged were these enemies that they were likely to retaliate for their losses by an unauthorized continuance of the fight, and it was to secure her people against such an event Esther wisely made this request. This extension of the decree was to have effect only *in Shushan*, not in the provinces.—*Whedon's Com.* **Let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows**] *i. e.* crucify the dead bodies in order to increase the disgrace of their execution, but more in order to augment the fear of the Jews. This was the Hebrew and Persian custom.—*Lange.* **16. And had rest from their enemies**] The position of these words in the middle of the verse is noticeably strange. There may be here some disarrangement of the text, or it may be, as Keil suggests, "that the narrator desired at once to point out how the matter ended." Such apparent disorder of the text is not always to be regarded as evidence of corruption by transcribers. The Hebrew writers are not always the best models of accuracy and perfection of literary style. **Seventy and five thousand**] "The slaughter of these seventy-five thousand shows," says Wordsworth, "that a very large number of their heathen enemies, who had been exasperated against the Jews, had prepared themselves for an attack upon them; and that, presuming upon their own numbers and forces as compared with the Jews, they assaulted them in order to destroy and despoil them, and to enrich themselves with their property; and that the Jews made a vigorous resistance, and by the help of God, routed their assailants with a great discomfiture. The slaughter was not the consequence of a vindictive spirit in the Jews, but of the bitter animosity of their enemies; and it proves that the Jews would have been extinguished (as Haman's decree intended that they should be) if God had not interfered to rescue them from destruction." **17—19. Therefore . . . the fourteenth day**] Because the Jews outside of Shushan did all their fighting on the thirteenth, and rested on the fourteenth, as stated in ver. 17, **Therefore**] they made the latter day their day of feasting and joy but the Jews in Shushan, having fought both on the thirteenth and fourteenth, made the fifteenth their feast day (ver. 18). **Jews of the villages**] Rather of the country places, that is, as distinguished from those that dwell in cities and the country (not *unwalled towns*, as our version has it, for some of these country towns may have had walls). The writer of this was evidently a citizen of Shushan, and seems to have regarded the whole Persian empire outside of this capital city as country.—*Whedon's Com.* **And of sending portions one to another**] According to ver. 22, one made presents in these feasts, similar to the sacrificial feasts, to those less wealthy, but also to others to whom one desired to signify a joyous mind.—*Lange.* **20—32.**] The feast of Purim instituted by letters from Mordecai and Esther. **20. Mordecai wrote these things**] Namely, the things or occurrences that transpired throughout the Persian empire on the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of Adar. He wrote a report of the matter as of something worthy to be chronicled for everlasting remembrance, and with this record he also sent letters unto all the Jews throughout the empire of Ahasuerus, proposing to them what is stated in the next two verses. Mordecai's official position in the Persian court enabled him to establish this festival as no other Jew could have done. He could issue orders with royal authority, and use the posts and agents of the empire to facilitate his plans. The statement here made, that Mordecai chronicled these events and wrote letters to all the Jews, will not warrant the conclusion that he was the author of this Book of Esther, but is sufficient to show that such a conclusion is not therefore improbable.—*Whedon's Com.* **21.**] To establish a matter, to authorize it. **23. The Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written to them**] They had begun, as ver. 22 tells us, by keeping both days, and Mordecai wrote to them that they should make this an annual custom. This they agreed to do, in consequence of Mordecai's letters. The reason for their so doing is given in vers. 24 and 25, and the name of this festival is explained in ver. 26, by a brief recapitulation of the events which gave rise to it.—*Keil.* **25. When Esther came before the king**] As the word Esther is not in the Hebrew text, and is not mentioned in the context, it is better to translate "when it came before the king," that is, when Haman's wicked device came before the king.—*Whedon's Com.* **26.**] They evidently chose the name Purim in ironical reference to the fact that Haman's lucky day (designated by lot) was so fortunate for his enemies, and so unlucky for himself. **27.**] The Jews established and took upon themselves, their descendants, and all who should join themselves unto them (proselytes), so that it should not fail (*i. e.* inviolably), to keep (to celebrate) these two days according to the writing concerning them and the time appointed thereby year by year.—*Keil.* **28. And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, and these days of Purim are not to pass away among the Jews, nor their remembrance to cease among their seed**] The continued observance of Purim to this day is a monumental proof of the truth of this history. **29—32.**] A second letter from queen Esther and Mordecai to appoint fasting and lamentation on the days of Purim. **29.**] And Esther the queen and Mordecai the Jew wrote with all strength, that is, very forcibly, to appoint this second letter concerning Purim, *i. e.* to give to the contents of this second letter the force of laws.—*Keil.* **31. The matters of the fastings and their cry**] Here it incidentally comes out that fasting and lamentation were also to be

connected with the observance of Purim. The modern Jews observe the thirteenth of Adar, the anniversary of the day of slaughter, as a day of fasting, and call it *the fast of Esther*. This day of fasting and supplication is preliminary to the two days' feast that follows. It is not improbable that Esther herself may have proposed this fast, as a memorial of the grief that preceded their joy, and that the people approved and sanctioned it, and called it Esther's fast. **32. The decree of Esther**] This is to be understood as the same with the letter of authority respecting Purim which is mentioned in ver. 29, and was issued by both Esther and Mordecai. **It was written in the book**] The decree of Esther was recorded, and doubtless with it, also, an account of the institution of the feast of Purim. *The book* referred to here is somewhat uncertain. Some have thought the Book of Esther is intended; but the author of that book would hardly have designated his own work in this way. Bertheau and Keil think it was a book or treatise on the feast of Purim, which our author used in preparing his work, but which has not come down to us. This, however, is purely conjectural. It seems most natural, since we have in several other passages of this history a mention of the book of the chronicles of Media and Persia (chap. ii. 23; vi. 1; x. 2), to understand *the book* of this verse as that same book of State annals. The documents issued by Esther and Mordecai, establishing the feast of Purim, and perhaps, also, describing its origin and mode of observance, may well have been registered among the national chronicles. The following account of the manner in which the feast of Purim is observed by the Jews of the present day is substantially from Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible':—The observance commences with *the fast of Esther* (see note above on ver. 31) on the thirteenth of Adar. If the thirteenth falls upon a sabbath, the fast is placed upon the Thursday preceding. As soon as the evening preceding the fourteenth of the month arrives, candles are lighted in token of rejoicing, and the people assemble at the synagogue. The Book of Esther, written on a roll called *the Megillah*, is produced, and, after a short prayer, the reader proceeds to read it in a histrionic manner, aiming to suit his tones and gestures to the sense. When he pronounces the name of Haman the congregation exclaim, "May his name be blotted out," or, "Let the name of the ungodly perish," and at the same time the children present make a great noise with their hands, or with pieces of wood and stone. The names of Haman's ten sons are read with one breath, to signify that they were all hung at once. (Comp. note on chap. ix. 7—9.) When the roll is read through the whole congregation exclaim, "Cursed be Haman; blessed be Mordecai; cursed be Zeresh, the wife of Haman; blessed be Esther; cursed be all idolaters; blessed be all Israelites, and blessed be Harbonah, who hanged Haman." When this evening service is over all go home and partake of a simple repast. On the morning of the fourteenth all resort to the synagogue again; prayer is offered, and the passage of the law (Exod. xvii. 8—16) relating the destruction of the Amalekites is read, for the Jews regard Haman as a descendant of Agag the Amalekite. (See note on chap. iii. 1.) The roll of Esther is again read, as on the preceding evening. When the synagogue service is ended, all give themselves over to feasting and joy. Presents are sent to and fro among friends and relations, and liberal gifts are bestowed upon the poor. Games, dramatical entertainments, dancing, and music are resorted to, and every effort is made to promote general merriment and joy. Such festivities and joy are continued through the fifteenth also, but any Jews who desire may carry on their usual business during the days of this festival. Josephus attests the observance of Purim in his day: "Even now all the Jews in the world celebrate these days with feasting (ἑορτάζουσι), sending portions to one another. . . . They celebrate the fore-mentioned days, calling them *Phrouraim* (Φρουραιους)."—*Ant.* xi. 13. A number of Jewish proverbs also attest the high esteem in which this feast was held: "The temple may fail, but Purim never." "The Prophets may fail, but not the Megillah." It was even said that no books would survive in the Messiah's kingdom but the Law and the Megillah.—*Whedon's Com.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 1.

HOPE AND FOREBODING.

WE often hear that it is darkest just before the dawn, darkest in the natural world, darkest in the moral world, darkest in the world of God's providential arrangements. Often has this been illustrated and proved in the history, both of individuals and of nations. The laws of nature are typical of the laws of God's kingdom; essentially they are the same, as coming from the same ruler. In the natural world the deeper darkness is the herald of coming day; so it often has been in all histories, whether individual or national. The darkness was now deepening about the Jews; the month Adar was now close at hand. The fatal day drew near when the king's commandment and his decree were to be put into execution; but the fatal day was turned into the festal day. The light afar off was sending forth its beautiful and cheering rays; but the Jews had not the power to catch the oncoming gladness, for their eyes were too dull to see: so it may be

with us. Let us trust in God through the storm, and through the darkness. Let us pray—Open our eyes that we may see when all around appears dark and dismal. On the other hand, it must be remembered that there is a real darkness thickening around the sinner, while he fondly dreams of glorious light. It was so with these "enemies of the Jews." They vainly thought that the thirteenth day of the month Adar was to be the day of their victory. On that day the sun was to shine upon their pathway of triumph. Alas! on that day the sun was but to shine as a funeral taper on their gloomy pathway to the everlasting darkness. Let evil-doers beware; let them seek to be wise in time; let them strive to have understanding of the times; let them not dream of coming light, when all the signs indicate that the darkness is only growing more intense.

I. **Hope blighted.** "In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them." From a human point of view it was natural that these enemies of the Jews should entertain such a hope. The human reasonableness of this hope may be shown—(*a*) *From their own numbers.* The population was undoubtedly large as seen from the immense numbers slain by the Jews. It was natural then, as it is natural now, to rely upon numbers. We expect success on the side of that army that can bring the largest forces into the field, other things being equal. (*b*) *From the insignificance of the Jews.* A few people scattered up and down that vast country in a state of captivity, could have no chance against their numerous and powerful enemies. These Persians calculated as we calculate to-day, and they found, as we moderns too often find to our cost, that they reckoned without their host. There is a true, broad sense in which the battle is the Lord's, and He can save by few as well as by many. (*c*) *From the known unchangeableness of Persian law.* There did not seem the slightest chance for the Jews. The hope of these enemies of the Jews rested on as good ground as any hope could do. But after all it was blighted, for the hope was changed. In a short time there was a marvellous vicissitude. Their sun of expectation suddenly shot into darkness just as they were fancying that it was nearing the meridian of splendour. Thus, the hope of the unjust must perish sooner or later. There can be no escape. The goodly houses built upon the sand of human reasoning must be swept away, even though the sand may appear to possess the solidity of the rock.

II. **Foreboding reproved.** The same human reasoning which led these enemies of the Jews to entertain hope would induce the Jews to give way to dark and injurious forebodings. If the faithful and valorous Esther had her great fears, how much more is it to be supposed that the rest of the Jews would look forward to the month Adar in a spirit of agonizing dread. How often we look forward to a month Adar, and see it shrouded with ominous darkness. There is such a month in the lives of most. Yea, there are gloomy temperaments to whom every year has its month Adar, rising gloomily, and yet grand in its gloom, like some lofty mountain. But the month Adar may, after all, be the month of rejoicing. As the traveller rejoices when he reaches the mountain top, and feasts upon the grand panorama of nature, so these Jews might rejoice when they reached the thirteenth day of the month Adar. The very day we feared has been the day of Divine deliverance and of Divine blessing. It is a day of rejoicing, but it is a day of humiliation. God's grant of success may be God's reproof of our unbelief and our forebodings. However darkly the month Adar may loom in the distance, let us move on towards it, encouraging ourselves in the Lord our God. Give to the winds thy fears; hope, and be undismayed. Hope on, hope always. Above all things, do not indulge in forebodings. It is injurious to thy own nature. It saps thy vital energies. It undermines thy physical strength and thy mental power. It can mend nothing, and is the result, in part, of a want of faith in God. It is sinful if there be no effort to overcome.

III. **True hope rewarded.** "It was turned to the contrary that the Jews had rule over them that hated them." Those amongst the Jews who looked above the

vain state of men and things to the great supreme, and entertained hope in spite of all that seemed to make against hope, had their glorious reward in due season. The Jews had the mastery over their enemies. God's people must finally triumph over their real foes. Real foes, for there are foes in seeming which are true friends. But no real foes, that is, foes that militate against highest interests, will be allowed to reign in perpetual triumph. Every enemy must be destroyed; even the last enemy, death, must be put under the feet. The hope of the righteous cannot perish. What happened unto the Jews, happened to them for ensamples to the people of God in all ages. Our moral experiences will find their counterpart in what we may call the material experiences of the Jewish people. They triumphed in a more material point of view. Their successes were even in the present state. God's people now must look to triumph in a moral point of view. Their true success must be in the mighty future of God's eternity. The hope that is built upon God's word cannot fail. The hope that springs from faith in Jesus Christ must bloom into the flowers of paradise that never fade, and ripen into the fruits of the celestial Eden that never decay. Have faith in God, and in Jesus Christ his only Son.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 1.

He himself says once, with more justness than originality: Man is, properly speaking, based upon hope; he has no other possession than hope; this world of his is emphatically the place of hope. What then was our professor's possession? We see him, for the present, quite shut out from hope; not looking into the golden orient, but vaguely all round into a dim copper firmament, pregnant with earthquake and tornado.—*Sartor Resartus.*

In the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped, &c. But their hope ran aslope, as they say; their lucky day deceived them. Wicked men's hope, when they most need it, will be as the giving up of the ghost, and that is but cold comfort; and as the spider's web, who gets to the top of the window as high as she can, and then when she falls she falls to the bottom, for nothing stays her. From such high hopes fell our English Papists; first, when Queen Mary died. You hope and hope (said Dale the promoter to Julian Irving, whom he had apprehended), but your hope should end in a rope; for though the queen fail, she that you hope for should never come to it; for there is my Lord Cardinal's grace and many more between her and it. Secondly, at Queen Elizabeth's death, that long-looked for day, as they called it, triumphing before the victory, and selling the hide before they had taken the beast. This they had done before in 1588, when in assurance of victory they had styled their forces the Invincible Armada; and also afterwards at the powder-plot, when they had presumptuously disposed of the chief offices, holds, and revenues of the land; like as before the Pharsalian field was fought, the Pompeians were in such miserable security, that some of them contended for the priesthood, which was Cæsar's office; others disposed of the consulships and offices in Rome. So at the battle of Agincourt in France, where our Henry V. won the day, the French were so confident of a victory that they sent to king Henry to know what ransom he would give. A presumptuous confidence goes commonly bleeding home, when an humble fear returns in triumph.—*Trapp.*

Though it was turned to the contrary.—By a sweet and gracious providence of God, whose glory it is to help at a pinch, to alter the scene all on a sudden, to begin where we have given over, and to cause a strange turn of things, according to that of the Psalmist; God should send from heaven and save me (when it might seem to some that salvation itself could not save me), he should send forth his mercy and his truth, and then what should hinder the Church's happiness?—*Trapp.*

The day in which the enemies of the

Jews expected to see the realization of their hopes, became instead for the Jews a day of victory, and for their enemies a day of reverse and defeat. This, under existing circumstances, seemed to be a change which could only be brought about, as it were, by a miracle. It was, indeed, one of those providences by means of which it has pleased God to reveal himself from time to time in an especially remarkable manner. At all events, the prophets had foretold such occurrences as a matter surely to be expected. When the captivity of Israel should have reached its culmination, when the people of God are on the point of expiring under the rod of their drivers, then, instead of really perishing, they should become captors of their captors and taskmasters of their drivers. What is here shown in a small prelude, according to such prophecy, should attain a much larger circumference and a much greater glory. Our book itself, according to its deeper significance, points in in a manner typical or prophetical to this great and glorious final history. As a matter of fact, this change of affairs was itself deeply grounded in the nature and circumstances of things. So certain as the God of Israel was the only true God, whose kingdom should not be destroyed, but through all apparent reverses should continually rise to new and greater victories, so likewise to his people,—so long as it is the sole bearer of his sway, the grave, which threatens to swallow it up, should ever be a place of revivification and resurrection. And to-day also his empire must continue; and that which thought to overcome its power must itself be overcome, and either be absorbed or consigned to destruction. All the days of persecution of God's kingdom are days indeed in which its enemies hope to overcome it, but it always turns out that such enemies are themselves conquered at last.—*Lange.*

We have above such an example in Haman, who was himself hung on the cross which he had prepared for Mordecai; so the Egyptians were themselves overwhelmed in the sea to which they had driven the Israelites in order to overwhelm them. So also Saul, who had driven David over to the Philistines, that they might destroy him, was himself destroyed by the Philistines.—*Brenz.*

We learn from this passage the comfortable truth, that God's people obtain the victory over their enemies. Whatever hardships and troubles God's people have to endure in the world, and however dark and lowering the cloud may be which sometimes hangs over them, yet, "at evening time it will be light to them," and death's temporary triumph over them will only lead to their eternal triumph over it and all their foes. Be not discouraged, ye that fear and serve the Lord. Greater is he that is for you than all that can be against you. Fight the good fight of faith, the crown of life is sure to all who are in Christ.—*Davidson.*

Foresight and foreboding are two very different things. It is not that the one is the exaggeration of the other, but the one is opposed to the other. The more a man looks forward in the exercise of foresight, the less he does so in the exercise of foreboding; and the more he is tortured by anxious thoughts about a *possible* future, the less clear vision has he of a *likely* future, and the less power to influence it.

What does your anxiety do? It does not empty to-morrow of its sorrows, but it empties to-day of its strength; it does not make you escape the evil, it makes you unfit to cope with it when it comes; it does not bless to-morrow, and it robs to-day. For every day has its own burden. Sufficient for each day is the evil which properly belongs to it. Do not add to-morrow's to to-day's. Do not drag the future into the present. The present has enough to do with its own proper concerns. We have always strength to bear the evil when it comes. We have not strength to bear the foreboding of it. As thy day, thy strength shall be. In strict proportion to the existing exigencies will be the God-given power; but if you cram and condense to-day's sorrows by experience, and to-morrow's sorrows by anticipation, into the narrow round of the one four-and

twenty hours, there is no promise that as that day thy strength shall be.

God gives us power to bear all the sorrows of his making; but he does not give us power to bear the sorrows of our own making, which the anticipation of sorrow most assuredly is.

Our hope should make us buoyant, and should keep us firm. It is an anchor of the soul. All men live by hope, even when it is fixed upon the changing and uncertain things of this world. But the hopes of men, who have not their hearts fixed upon God, try to grapple themselves on the cloud-rack that rolls along the flanks of the mountains, and *our* hopes pierce within that veil and lay hold of the Rock of Ages that towers above the flying vapours. Let us then be strong, for our future is not a dim peradventure, or a vague dream, nor a fancy of our own, nor a wish turning itself into a vision, but it is made and certified by him who is God of all past and of all the present. It is built upon his word, and the brightest hope of all its brightness is the enjoyment of more of his presence and the possession of more of his likeness. That hope is certain. Therefore let us live in it. "Reach forth unto the things that are before."—*Maclaren.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 2, 3.

Self-Help brings Help.

I. Divine help. In this narrative we see all along that the Jews were helped by God. We find clear traces of a superior power delivering this people from the power of their enemies. Mere human reasons cannot account for the fact that these Jews—captive and dispersed—so marvellously triumphed over the many and skilful foes arrayed against them. We are now brought to the point where the Divine power is most manifestly revealed. All need Divine help, and all must have it more or less in the journey of life if it is to be successful in the highest point of view.

II. Divine help fosters and succeeds self-help. Some speak loudly in the praise of self-help. It must not be undervalued. But to speak to bruised and maimed humanity of self-help apart from any other help is a solemn mockery, is a withering irony. Should we tell the drowning man to try self-help, and not throw out to him the rope of help? Should we tell the bankrupt and ruined man to try self-help, and give him no capital? Should we advise the poor outcast to try self-help, and yet leave him without a character? Our ruined selves must be repaired from above before we can effectually help ourselves. Divine help must first work, and then there can be successful self-help. Jesus did not say to the man with the withered arm, Trust to self-help. Power was conveyed in the word, Stretch forth thy hand; and then the man was able to help himself. This, too, be observed—put forth all thy power, and God will not fail. Help thyself first by heartily seeking help from heaven, and then by doing thy very utmost. These Jews helped themselves by (*a*) *co-operation.* "The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus." In these days of vast co-operative societies—of the teachings of political economy—it may not be needful to urge the advantages of co-operation. However, the Church still needs to learn the important lesson that its members should be gathered together, not as so many mere material bodies, but as being animated by one spirit. The members of the spiritual Israel must be gathered together so as to make one compact body. The day has not yet come when Christians are of one mind. Many men, many minds; many Christians, many minds. Members of the same branch of the Christian community do not co-operate. Let us gather ourselves together around the Cross of Jesus Christ, and taste the outflowing and uniting power of the Saviour's love. (*b*) By *active agency.* "To lay hand on such as sought their hurt." Never

mind the difficult questions suggested by the course of proceedings described in this chapter; be practical. Learn the lesson that they co-operated for work. They did not co-operate merely by assembling together at public meetings in order to be told, in eloquent language, how the thing was to be done, and then dispersing without any well-timed effort to do the thing. There was no Exeter Hall in Shushan; there was no need of priestly eloquence. Patriotism stirred their hearts; a common danger impelled to united efforts at defence. Patriotism should stir the hearts of Englishmen to-day. The common danger that threatens our holy religion should impel all lovers of Jesus to united and mighty efforts. Let us lay the hand of love on such as seek the hurt of all that is true, and noble, and virtuous. There is a call, loud and long, to-day to every one, whether clergy or laity, to active agency in order to repress evil, and to promote the best interests—that is, the Christian interests—of our humanity. (*c*) By *a name of power*. The fear of the Jews fell upon all the people, from the lowest to the highest, for the leaders of the people felt this fear. Is there not a true sense in which the fear of the Christian should fall upon the wicked? Does not the sinner quake in the presence of the pure and the holy? However, the Christian's name should be one of power, not only to inspire fear, but to attract. (*d*) By *aggressive measures*. "No man could withstand them." There was a time when it seemed to come near the truth to say that no man could withstand the influence of Christianity. It went forth an all-subduing force; it went forth conquering and to conquer. Wonderful the successes and the triumphs of the primitive Church! But alas! what shall we say of these times? Shall we take up our lament and say, How is the mighty fallen? Shall we not be accused of pessimism if we declare that Christianity is now being conquered by the world, instead of the world being conquered by Christianity? The world says that Christianity is effete. Does Christianity, by its modern successes, disprove the accusations of the children of this world? Certainly much, very much more requires to be done. Oh, arm of the Lord, awake!

III. Self-help secures the help of others. That is, the self-help that is successful secures the help of others, for in this sense it often is that nothing succeeds like success. At all events, all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king helped the Jews—to what extent is not stated. They probably facilitated the Jews in their preparations to defend themselves. These governors saw that the Jews were on the high road to victory, and therefore they went in for the winning side. They were most likely politic men, and the fear of losing their places would induce them to help the Jews. How many helpers in this world are ready to help those who do not require help? Alas! how few are found to give help to the really helpless and forlorn. The poor and thirsty still seek the water of help and of deliverance, but find none; while the rich and prosperous have much abundance poured into the lap. This world's helpers go to the rich and the great; Christ, the great helper of humanity, went to the publicans and harlots. He gave help to the helpless, strength to the weak, water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, healing to the poor sick, and life to the dead.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 2, 3.

The Jews were the conquerors. "The day in which their enemies hoped to have power over them was turned to the contrary, so that the Jews had rule over those that hated them." This was the doing of the Lord, and ought to be wondrous in our eyes. But though the victory was of God, means were employed in winning it; and the first was the valour and good conduct of the Jews themselves. They "stood for their lives," and "remembering the Lord, who is great and terrible," "fought for their brethren, their sons and their daughters, their wives and their houses." And their prudence equalled their cour-

age. Had each endeavoured to protect himself and his family, they would have become an easy prey to their foes; but they "gathered themselves together in their cities in all the provinces," and in this way encouraged one another, and presented a formidable front to their adversaries. Secondly, their enemies were struck with terror. Disappointed of the hopes which they had cherished, perceiving the boldness and wise conduct of the Jews, and convinced in their own breasts that they were embarked in an unjust and criminal design, they lost courage and yielded up the day. Thirdly, the rulers in the different provinces encouraged the Jews by their countenance, being induced to this by the awe in which they stood of Mordecai, who not only retained his high place, but rose daily in the royal favour, and in his reputation as an able and virtuous statesman.—*M'Crie.*

The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. "Thou shalt not kill." This commandment, in some cases, binds us to kill. It requires us to use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life; and in preserving our own lives, we may be reduced to the unpleasant necessity of taking away the lives of other men. The Jews were compelled on the thirteenth day of the month Adar to take arms into their hands to destroy all that might rise up against them; and they acted wisely in uniting themselves in large bodies to resist the power of their enemies. Had they stood single in arms, they might all have been destroyed with ease. But their combination in the various cities of the king's dominions made them terrible and irresistible. Let us learn from their example to stand fast in one spirit, and with one mind, to strive against the enemies of our souls, who endeavour to rob us of our faith, more precious than our lives. The Church is terrible, like an army with banners, when her rulers and members are closely united, under the captain of salvation, to oppose her enemies.

No man could now withstand the Jews, for the fear of them fell upon all people. They had the king, the queen, the prime minister, upon their side, and, what was still more, they had the providence of God upon their side. "He caused judgment to be heard from heaven," as audibly as if an angel had proclaimed his favour to the Jews, and his indignation against their enemies. The wonderful works of Providence have oft struck terror into the hardiest enemies of Zion.

And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. There were two decrees in equal force which might have given them a fair pretence for taking the part of the Jews, or of their enemies, as they pleased; but it was plain that the king's favour was towards the Jews, and that if they expected any favour from him, it was necessary to secure the good will of Mordecai. They chose that side in the contest which their own interest prescribed. What a pity is it that all princes do not favour the cause of religion! If they did, iniquity would be compelled to stop her mouth, and those men who do not value religion would treat it at least with respect.—*Lawson.*

They acted in unison. "They gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives." Union is power: concentration of strength is mighty for good and for evil. How awful the extent of the mischief perpetrated by the evil spirits, because they act in concert—unitedly: whereas disunion would cause even *their* kingdom to fall. By virtue of this perfect combination they succeed in deceiving the nations, and leading myriads captive at their will. Satan thus maintains such a sway over mankind as to entitle him to the name of "God of this world." "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then can his kingdom stand?" Union and co-operation are likewise powerful for the production of good. Hence o pies of the Divine writings are

flying to all parts of the world; and missionaries to unfold their precious contents to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. What would individual efforts do in cases like these? Hence arise hospitals for the bodies of men, and places of instruction for their souls. Amid the favourable signs of our day, this is among the most cheering—the frequent formation of associations for the amelioration of the state of man. May new plans of usefulness be still devised, and may the blessed Spirit of God stir up the people to support them, so that at home and abroad truth and holiness may flourish and abound.

They laid hands on all such as sought their hurt, and no man could withstand them. They were acting legally; for the royal law permitted them to defend themselves: and when we act legally, we may act boldly and courageously.

Trust in God, in his power and faithfulness, is the only source of true magnanimity. It is this alone that makes man undaunted on *rational* grounds. St. Paul tells us of the ancient believers, that "out of weakness they were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." And this, he tells us, was the effect of relying on God.

God filled the Persians with fear and trembling, so that, when the battle took place, they were so intimidated, that they made but the feeblest resistance, and fell an easy prey into the hands of their enemies. "No man could withstand them" (the Jews), "for the fear of them fell upon all people." This was one way by which the Lord promised of old victory to the Israelites over their enemies. If they would regard his laws, he engaged to deprive their adversaries of their courage and fortitude. "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee."

Brethren, none can injure whom God is resolved to protect. He has all hearts in his hand. Though earth and hell combine against his people, they shall not prosper. He is a munition of rocks—a strong tower, into which the righteous flee, and are in safety. What was David compared with Goliath? Yet, inasmuch as he went forth in the name of the God of the armies of Israel, the vaunting Philistine soon fell before him. God is a man of war, and makes his people more than conquerors over the opponents of their salvation. "None shall pluck them out of my Father's hands." Trust in him, ye infirm and feeble, and ye shall tread down your enemies—one of you shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. Brethren, we have more formidable enemies than these Jews had,—more crafty and more inveterate,—even the principalities and powers of hell; and the consequences of being vanquished are infinitely more woeful. None can defeat and destroy these enemies but he who defeated the counsel and prevented the evil designs of wicked Haman. Apply to this great Being—this Omnipotent Being—in the all-prevailing name of Christ, and you shall triumph over every foe: you shall have a day of feasting and gladness—a good day—a day of pure and holy and everlasting joy. Trust in him, and heaven shall be your dwelling-place for ever. "The Lord will give strength to his people: the Lord will bless his people with peace." —*Hughes.*

And no man could withstand them. A good cause, a good conscience, and a good courage; what cannot these three do when they meet? How should any stand before those who are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might? Pilate's wife could warn him of meddling with such; and Haman's wife could tell him that a Jew might fall before a Persian and get up again and prevail. But if a Persian, or whosoever of the Gentiles, begin to fall before a Jew, he can neither stand nor rise. There is an invisible hand of omnipotency that striketh in for his own, and confounds their opposites.

For the fear of them fell upon all the people. This was the work, not of some Pan Deus Arcadiæ, but of God, the sole giver of victory, who, when he pleaseth, affrighteth the Church's enemies, as he

promiseth to do in many places. And as accordingly he did it on the Egyptians, Midianites, Philistines, Syrians, &c. And the like he did for Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, against the great Caliph; for the Hussites against all the force of Germany; for the Angrognians against the Pope's army that came against them.

Because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.—But much more, because God himself over-awed them, and dispirited them. How else should he appear to be the God of the spirits of all flesh, and that in the thing wherein people deal proudly he was above them? How should they come to know themselves to be but men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit; if he did not other whiles make their hearts heartless, their hands feeble, their eyes fail, and their knees knock together, as Belshazzar's did. How else would they ever be brought to bring presents unto him that ought to be feared? If Mordecai be feared, it is because God hath put a majesty upon him, and made him dreadful, as Abraham was likewise to Abimelech, David to Saul, the Baptist to Herod, our Saviour to the Pharisees, Paul and Silas to their persecutors. And this the Lord still doth, that he may dwell upon earth, in his faithful worshippers, which wicked men would not suffer, if not thus reined in and restrained. And, secondly, that praise may wait for him in Zion, and unto him may the vow be performed.—*Trapp.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSE 4.

THE GREATNESS OF GOODNESS.

This verse is given as a reason why the fear of Mordecai fell upon all the people. "For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater." It is given unto but few to attain unto that social and political greatness that was the possession of Mordecai: but many may become possessors of that goodness which was the foundation of Mordecai's greatness, and therefore we must speak of his goodness in order to inspire if possible a reasonable ambition. Let us strive to be good and noble, for this is true and lasting greatness. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus.

I. **Goodness is greatness.** This is a truth which many may profess but which very few practise. The goodness of earth's great ones is admired; but goodness in earth's little ones is too often left unnoticed. However, goodness, wherever found—in cot or in palace—is not unnoticed by the good God. Mordecai was great because he was good. On this very account he rose to the highest position in the Persian empire. He was great in the king's house, not through political intrigue, not through the carrying out of any wily schemes, not on account of his gifts as an orator, but on account of his goodness. His faithfulness in a lowly sphere when he discovered and exposed a wicked conspiracy, his benevolent attachment to Esther, and his patriotic interest in his countrymen, were the reasons of his promotion. He did not follow the rules of goodness as being the way to earthly greatness. He did not act on the principle that gain is godliness. Let us aspire after the greatness of goodness. In lowly walks of life, without any sinister objects in view, without any thought that a virtuous course of conduct is the most prudent and the most profitable, let us move on in the pathway of goodness. Let a deep love of the Saviour be the all-compelling motive power. Let us have a supreme respect unto the recompense of the heavenly reward.

II. **The greatness of goodness extends.** Mordecai's fame went out throughout all the provinces. He was not little at home and great abroad, but he was great abroad because he was great at home. No man is a hero to his valet. But the

good man is a hero everywhere. Your earthly great ones are only great on large occasions and in public. The spiritually great are great in public, but their brightest glories shine out for the benefit of those who know them best. The common people heard the Saviour gladly; but that disciple whom Jesus loved saw the most of his Divine greatness and glory. Mordecai's light shone in the palace, but it could not be hid, and its clear rays shone out to the remotest provinces. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Oh for the light of that goodness which illumines and gladdens the home, and then extends itself in ever-widening and ever-increasing circles!

III. **The greatness of goodness developes.** This man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. Mordecai was a growing man. We see his noble manliness developing day by day, and week by week. Goodness is the one quality which may be ever increasing and developing. Physical power can only be increased up to a certain point and for a certain period. Samson at last reaches the climax of mere physical prowess. Intellectual greatness has its limits. Even Solomon could only compass a certain amount of knowledge. Mordecai socially and politically could only wax greater and greater for a short period. But Mordecai morally and spiritually could wax greater and greater in indefinite spheres and through eternity. The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We follow the just to the perfect day of the upper Paradise, but even there we see them waxing greater and greater. There is, we believe, growth in heaven—growth in knowledge and growth in holiness. However that may be, let all seek to grow on earth. Grow in grace is the Divine command. We must either, morally considered, go backward or forward. Not to grow is to decay. To decay is to die. Excelsior should be the Christian's watch-word. Onward and upward to the heights of holiness, of a more perfect mastery over self and the world, and a more complete likeness to the blessed Saviour.

Suggestive Comments on Verse 4.

"He was great." Ah, how that word "greatness" is often misused and debased! A man bears a certain name, and therefore he is great; or he wears a certain robe, and therefore he is great; or he succeeds in slaughtering an immense number of his fellow-creatures, and there he is great; or by much cunning, and audacity, and cleverness withal, he keeps himself in conspicuous places and before the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, and therefore he is great! Not such greatness as any of these was that of Mordecai. It was a greatness won, no doubt, by his splendid faculty of management, by his statesmanship, but with real substance in it of truth and goodness. He was great, not only as at the practical head of the government of this great empire of Persia, but he was so esteemed among "his own people," who were despised and persecuted as they so often have been, and who numbered not more than one in thirty of the population. He "sought the wealth of his people." Jewish-like, no doubt, is this; but observe, it was his people's wealth, not his own, he sought. And the last word concerning him on record is this, that "he spake peace to all his seed." He was accessible, he was gentle, he was generous and patriotic, promoting the well-being of his seed, but not at the expense of the country in which he was born. Would that all who are in great place in our own country, and in this our own day, would follow very literally Mordecai's example and speak "peace."—*Raleigh.*

Mordecai was great in the king's house. He was known to be a Jew, and deeply interested in the protection of his own people. He had shown his wisdom as well as his power in the decree which had been issued by him, and during the intervening months his greatness had been steadily on the increase. Whatever may have been the means taken by

him to exhibit this ever-augmenting greatness to the people, they were deeply impressed with it, not in Shushan only, but also "throughout all the provinces." No doubt his management of public business would be of a very different kind from that of his predecessor. There would be no self-seeking, no vacillation, no favouritism toward offenders, but justice and equity, influenced and dispensed with high religious principle. Nothing else but this will, in the long run, stand the scrutiny and verdict of public opinion. By degrees there is gathered around it a moral weight which cannot fail to be respected by good, and feared by wicked, men. It is a greatness which is at once the offspring and reward of virtue. The fame of Mordecai made the enemies of the Jews afraid, and fear would weaken energy. On the other side, the Jews had faith in him who had raised up and given to Mordecai this power and greatness in their emergency and peril; and this faith in God was the harbinger of victory, even as the fear of those who were hostile to them was the sure precursor of defeat. Faith would give calmness and courage, just as fear would occasion haste and hesitation. In this we have the secret how that, with lesser numbers, the Jews yet commanded greater power, and had, from the commencement of the conflict, the promise of success. "The fear of them fell upon all people."—*McEwen.*

The promotion of Mordecai must have soon produced a most important change in favour of the Jews. Mordecai was universally beloved and respected, as well by the Persians as by his own countrymen. On that memorablo day when he went forth from the king's presence, and appeared for the first time in public, arrayed in the robes and golden tiara which belonged to his office, as chief minister of the Persian empire, we are told, that "the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad:"—rejoiced, not only at its deliverance from the terror of the detested Haman, but because his successor was known to be a wise, and good, and unselfish man; a magistrate, from whom all might expect justice; a ruler, from whom all honest and well disposed persons would receive favour and protection. The advancement of such a man to supreme power, added to the surprising discovery that the queen herself was a Jewess, and the nearest relative of the new minister, must have operated everywhere to the advantage of the Jews.

That a wish to please and conciliate the favour of any one in Mordecai's station, would lead the provincial authorities to espouse the cause of the Jews, and to help them, both in preparing for their defence, and afterwards in resisting their enemies, is only what might have been expected. Mordecai had, in effect, the absolute government of nearly the whole civilized world in his hands. And as his virtue, his moderation, and his disinterested love of truth and goodness, became known and understood, his moral influence increased every hour. "Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater." Like Joseph and Daniel, his illustrious countrymen, his power was used for the good of others. His authority was exerted in behalf of truth and justice. And as the subordinate officers of government would necessarily take their tone from him, the whole weight and influence of his office and station would be sure to operate in favour of the Jews, and raise up for them powerful friends and protectors. And so we are informed, that they all "helped the Jews."

But besides; all reflecting persons must have felt, that the Jews were protected by a higher power. A revolution so sudden, so unlooked for, so unparalleled in history; a manifestation of Providence, more wonderful than any interposition, not absolutely miraculous, which this mysterious people had ever before experienced, coming, as it did, immediately after the public fastings and prayers with which they had cast themselves and their families upon the Divine mercy,—such a strange and singular combination of events must have produced a great and widely-extended conviction, that Heaven itself had interfered to save them. And this persuasion

must likewise have disposed many of the better and more thoughtful sort, to consider more attentively than heretofore, the claims of the religion of the Jews to be a revelation from the supreme God. Accordingly, we are informed by the sacred historian, that "many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."—*Crosthwaite.*

At the time of the deliverance from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan, the Lord showed abundantly that he was able to make his people a great nation, despite the most powerful of their enemies. Now in its exile he again showed them, as for himself, he now no longer had need of them as a people, at least as a politically independent one. The great deeds that were then done were edifying and elevating in tendency; what he now did was momentous and instructive. It was plainly evident that he could accomplish his purpose aside from external means or political circumstances. It is still more manifest than it then was that it has pleased him to be powerful in those that are weak, and great in those who have little influence. In those days he prepared as his instruments the chief persons and princes of his own people, who were in a special manner filled with the Spirit. Now, however, he employs instead, the satraps and governors of Persia, little as they were willing or fit for such work. Together with and among kings, such as Cyrus and Ahasuerus, they must also further God's purpose. There was a time when the Lord had caused fear and terror to fall upon the peoples before Israel, especially those who stood opposed in war, so that they fled from before them. Now, however, the princes and governors, who had great fear, were obliged to protect the rights of the subjects of the king, and thus they protected Israel. This corresponded entirely to his greatness. Therein is shown his claim as the God of all men. This is itself further evinced by the fact that if his people will only become more spiritual, as is his wish, and partake of his nature, he will by no means leave them fatherless. But the more spiritual his kingdom, *i. e.* his people, will become, the more will he assist them to arrive at truth, justice, and security throughout the world while in it.—*Lange.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 5—11.

The Fate of Evil-doers.

Justice ought to be tempered by mercy. But there may be a danger of degenerating into what we may call sentimentalism. We seem to see the working of this feeling in the present day. We would not deal harshly, but we must deal justly, with the criminal classes. We must have respect to the welfare of society as a great whole. In reading some of the Old Testament accounts of slaughters and battles, we must not follow our own modern feelings; and we must make all due and proper allowance for the difference of times and of dispensations. After all proper allowances have been made, there will still be about those accounts that which is to us inexplicable on modern and even New Testament principles. Here are great slaughters that may well appear to us very strange. However, the narrative does not warrant the assumption that there was anything vindictive on the part of Esther or Mordecai. The Jews slew in self-defence. They killed only the men; they did not kill for personal enrichment, for on the spoil laid they not their hand. Let us seek to gather instruction from the whole narrative.

I. **The destruction of evil-doers.** The enemies of the Lord and of the Lord's Church must meet with retribution sooner or later. The haters of the Jews were visited with slaughter and destruction. Even in the gospel dispensation it is written, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is a

fearful thing for the hardened and the finally impenitent thus to fall. He that being often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. But Jesus Christ came to provide a way of escape from final destruction. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. Thus, through Christ Jesus, the stroke of retribution may be averted. By his stripes penitent and believing sinners may be healed and saved. If, then, we would escape the ministers of vengeance, we must lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel. Let us at once lay hold on the blessed hope. Let us penitently bow at the foot of the cross. Let us believingly apply to the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

II. The infamy of evil-doers. The ten sons of Haman receive an unenviable notoriety. Their names are recorded and handed down to all the ages, and thus branded, as it were, with undying infamy. Far better to go down to the grave unknown than to occupy that place in history which is occupied by these ten men. Better still to go down to the grave along the pathway of righteous endeavour to keep God's commandments. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. These ten men were damaged by parental influence, but we do not read that they made any effort to rise superior to the evil influence of their circumstances. It is sometimes very convenient to blame parents, and to blame our circumstances. The question will arise, Have we done the best we could in spite of our circumstances? Have we shown the noble sight of men bravely battling with and against adversity? Faithful endeavour cannot be altogether lost. Men will be judged according to their light, their opportunities, their circumstances, and their talents. Be wise in time.

III. The report of the fate of evil-doers. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace, was brought before the king. An account was kept. The report has a solemn voice. If strict accounts are kept on earth, strict accounts are kept in heaven. The dead, both small and great, must stand before God, and the books will be opened. Oh, who shall be able to stand when the books are opened? How very many would shrink from the exposure of the outward acts and the inward thoughts and feelings of one year of their sinful lives? What a dark scroll! Let me not brave the opening of the books in that great day. Let me, O my Saviour, find in that day that thy precious blood has been sprinkled upon the pages of the great book, and all the black record of my misdoings has been wiped clean away, and nothing is to be seen but clear pages. May I be found at last washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 5—11.

It is one thing to take revenge of one's self, another to do so on the order of authority; not the latter, but the former, is forbidden. The simple command of a government will justify such an act only in so far as it is a guaranty against pure thirst for revenge. Everything here depends upon the disposition of mind. But we would certainly misjudge the temper of the then Jews, were we to assume that because the people were but a religious community, we are at liberty to apply a Christian standard to them. It would be unjust to deny them the privilege, which they as an independent people formerly enjoyed, of rejoicing in a victory over their enemies; and it would be little to the purpose, if instead of aiming at their conversion, we acquiesced in their destruction. Instead of justifying the complaint that we do not pay sufficient regard to Old Testament national conditions, we must also remember that Old Testament saints could not well avoid often taking a stand-point opposed to their enemies, just as we are still allowed to assume a position at variance with those in enmity against God. Besides, we are not to forget that, for those who will not join themselves to the kingdom or people of God, whatever its form or

degree of development, this very hostility is a ground of condemnation. All things that cannot be employed for a good end will finally issue in destruction and extinction. This is still true, and will be true to the end of time. In the same manner even the angels in heaven could not have acted differently from Esther with regard to those enemies in the city of Shushan. We would be more just to Esther, to the Jews spoken of in our book, and to the book itself, if, in what was done in Shushan as well as in all Persia, we would see an anticipation of the judgments connected and paralleled with the progress of the kingdom of God on earth, and especially of the final judgment. If the animus of the Old Testament with respect to the destruction of enemies seems to us terribly vindictive, rather than mild, yet this may not only be excusable, but may even be a prophetic intimation. The fact, o prominently and emphatically expressed, in the present instance, that the Jews did not stretch out their hands after the goods (spoils) of their enemies, proves to us that they meant to conduct this contest as a measure of self-protection, or better, as a holy war, the sole purpose of which was the removal of their enemies. —*Lange.*

"This example, however, is set before us not that we should take it upon ourselves to avenge injuries, according to our own judgment, but that we may recognize the severity of the Divine wrath against the impious persecutor of the people of God, and that in persecution we might most confidently expect deliverance through faith, and be obedient to the calls of God."—*Brenz.*

"This is written in admonition of parents, in order that they may be incited to cultivate piety, lest along with themselves they may also drag their children down into destruction. Such severity of God is stated in the Decalogue: 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate me.'"—*Brenz.*

We may learn from this part of the history how dangerous it is to enter on a wicked course, especially in concert with others. Persons go on from evil to worse; they encourage one another in mischief. This is especially true as to those practices which originate in malice, as to which the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, exerts a peculiar influence, in urging his children to the most violent extremes. "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." But in addition to the considerations mentioned, we should stand in awe of the righteous judgment of God, who gives up wicked men to the uncontrolled corruption of their own hearts, and to the suggestions of the evil one, so that they often rush with their eyes open upon ruin. "Whom God means to destroy, he first infatuates."

This was remarkably exemplified in the case before us. In spite of all the discouragements thrown in their way, and though heaven and earth both frowned upon them, the enemies of the Jews persisted in their hostile intentions, and assumed an offensive posture on the long looked-for day.—*M'Crie.*

It may appear strange that the Jews now found any enemies bold enough to contend with them in battle. The king was their friend, God was their friend, what could those expect who sought their lives, but destruction to themselves? It is indeed wonderful, but not uncommon, for men to value the gratification of their malignant passions above their best interests, and above their safety. At the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it is well known that the Jews themselves did more mischief to one another, than all the harm they suffered from the fury of their conquerors. The different parties, when they found respite from the Romans, destroyed their provisions, and then brought upon themselves a famine, which destroyed them by thousands. But we need not look seventeen hundred years back to see the tyrannizing power of malice and hatred over the minds of men. Are there not many who subject themselves

to bitter remorse, to ruinous fines, or to an ignominious death? Are there not many more who subject themselves to the curse of God, merely to gratify their accursed spite against their fellow-men?

Many of the enemies of the Jews, doubtless, were overawed by the power of Mordecai, and either sat quiet in their dwellings, or joined with the Jews. Many chose rather to be quiet than to venture their lives in battle with enemies that were sure to be victorious. But there were others, not in small numbers, who chose to venture, or rather to sell their lives, and the lives of all that were dear to them, rather than lose the opportunity given them by law, of attempting to destroy a race of men whom, though innocent, they hated with a deadly hatred. These men combined in the different cities to fight against the Jews. But their confederacy was against the God of heaven, who spoiled them of their courage, and gave them into the hands of the Jews, to do to them as they would. They were so far from gaining their malicious purposes at the expense of their lives, that victory, and triumph to their hated enemies, were the fruit of their cruel attempt. Vain it is to fight against God, or against those whom he loves and protects. If God be against us, who can be for us? If we harden ourselves against the Almighty we cannot prosper. It were better for us to dash our heads against the craggy rock, than to rush upon the thick bosses of the buckler of the Almighty.

Why should men fight against God? And yet there are too many who fear not to carry the weapons of an unrighteous warfare against their Maker and their Judge. "Whatever ye have done, or not done, to one of the least of my brethren," says Christ, "ye have done, or not done, to me." Enmity against God himself; and surely "all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."

Even in Shushan the royal city, under the eye of the king, there were more than five hundred men that combined, in defiance of the king's known sentiments, to attack the Jews. But they meddled to their own hurt. When we consider the audacity of that behaviour, to which their malice prompted them, we see that Mordecai had too much reason to tell Esther that she would not be safe in the king's palace, if she did not intercede with the king. The men that could take the pretence of a law to attack the Jews to their certain destruction, might have been prompted by the same outrageous malice to attack Esther in the palace, when they could plead the king's authority for the enterprise.

These five hundred men in Shushan, who sold their lives in this desperate cause, were doubtless some of Haman's creatures, who had learned from him to hate the Jews with a bloody hatred. Haman's ten sons were at the head of them, and shared in their fate. They were doubtless trained up by their father in the hatred of that nation, and his miserable end, instead of opening their eyes, irritated their resentment to their own destruction.

It was natural, some will say, for Haman's sons to account that people their enemies, by the means of whom their father suffered an ignominious death. It was natural, it must be confessed; but it does not follow that it was right. Children are to honour their parents while they live, and venerate their memory when they are dead, but not to follow their example in anything that is evil. The children of wicked parents ought to remember, that their Maker must have the precedency to all other duties; and that to rebel against God, because their parents rebelled against him, is not more excusable than for a man to be a thief, or a traitor, or an adulterer, because his father was so before him. God commanded his people, when they were carried away captives for their transgression, to confess their own iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers. The holy son of the wicked Ahaz made a full confession of the sins committed by his father, and by the people under his influence, and deserved high praise for reversing all his wicked institutions. Jeroboam had only one son in his house who discovered a dislike of his father's conduct, and was the only member of the family who died in peace.

"Fill ye up the measure of your fathers," said Jesus to the Jews; warning them that their fathers' example would be so far from justifying their wicked conduct, that the vengeance of Heaven was brought the nearer them, that their sins were but a continuation of the sins of their progenitors.

Parents, pity your children, if you will not pity yourselves. You know what force the example and influence of parents have. If you profess bad principles, you of course train up your children in the profession of the same. If you openly practise wickedness, you teach your children to practise it likewise. Thus you pull down vengeance, not only upon yourselves, but upon your houses. You see that Haman was the enemy of the Jews, and of the God of the Jews, and the punishment of his wickedness fell heavy, not only on himself, but upon all his family, which was probably rooted out of the earth. His sons might have been suffered to live in obscurity, if they had been willing to live peaceably. But they had drunk deep of their father's spirit, and followed his example, and ten (probably all of them) perished on that fatal day, on which their father, a few months before, had hoped to feast his eyes with the blood of those whom he chose to account his enemies.—*Lawson.*

But on the spoil laid they not their hand.—Lest the king should be damnified, or themselves justly taxed of covetousness and cruelty. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." This is oft-repeated in this chapter, to their great commendation; that, although by the king's grant they might have taken the spoil, yet they did it not. 1. To show that they were God's executioners, not thieves and robbers. 2. To gratify the king for his courtesy towards them by leaving the spoil wholly to his treasury. 3. It is not unlikely, saith an interpreter, that Mordecai and Esther had admonished them how ill Saul had sped with the spoil of the Amalekites and Achan with his wedge of gold, which served but to cleave his body and soul asunder, and his Babylonish garment, which proved to be his winding-sheet.—*Trapp.*

Notwithstanding, the worst passions of some had been roused, and neither the king's wish nor the awe of Mordecai availed to restrain them. In the capital, five hundred men, led by Haman's ten sons, threw away their lives in the attempt to injure the Jews. It is not easy to pity them. If they had ceased from hating their neighbours and resisting God they would have been safe; but when they would not, there was nothing left but to kill them. In the rest of the provinces seventy-five thousand persons perished in the same way. An accurate report must have been gathered by the prime minister, now Mordecai, of the result in each city. The victory was uniform and complete from India to Ethiopia. The lesson of God's care over his people was thus taught over the known world in one day, and with greatly more effect than if an equal number of enemies had fallen under the walls of Jerusalem. And another lesson was taught by the unlooked-for self-restraint of the peculiar people. "But on the spoil laid they not their hands." You can imagine the widows and weak ones who were left in the houses of the foolhardy, after cowering in terror of massacre, or worse, all through the thirteenth of Adar, and perhaps the next day also, at length beginning to breathe freely. "How strange these Jews are! They care not for spoil, they insult us not, they rob us not, they have no revenge; they can fight,—that is proved,—but they fight only for liberty to live and worship their God." Yes; the whole transaction was ordained to vindicate the right of God's people to live as such on his earth; and this was all the more effectively done when the humane and unworldly character of their religion was so strikingly manifested.—*Symington.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 12—16.

THE RIGOUR OF JUSTICE.

Justice is stern, and in the course of justice none of us should see salvation. This is one of the glories of the new dispensation, that we may live under the reign of mercy, and not under the reign of justice. However, mercy must not be permitted to induce the spirit of presumption. If mercy harden, justice will be allowed to do its severe work. The prospect of mercy must lead to penitence, to faith, to renewed consecration, in order that the stroke of justice may be averted. In this paragraph let us see Esther as the personification of justice, and thus notice—

I. Justice works by striking terror. The proceedings of the Jews on this occasion were calculated to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies. Five hundred men slain in Shushan the palace, Haman's ten sons destroyed, the leaders of the movement against the Jews were all slaughtered. Thus a panic was spread amongst all those who had shown themselves the Jews' enemies. Justice works by terror. It is so under human rule. It is so under Divine rule. Society seeks to restrain the criminal by fear. But this can never be a permanently renovating power. It is by the indwelling force of Divine love that the evil must be extirpated. God's method of law and of justice in the old dispensation must give place to the brighter and surer method of love and mercy in the new dispensation. It is highly fitting that the dispensation which was to be permanent, which is for all races, should be one of mercy, and of love, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

II. Justice pursues to the bitter end. Haman's ten sons are slain, and then they are hanged upon the gallows. The Jews stood for their lives, and slew seventy and five thousand. Justice demands the uttermost farthing. It says, "Pay me what thou owest." It takes the penniless debtor and casts him into prison, there to lie until all the debt be paid. Justice is an exact accountant. Escape there cannot be from the stern grasp of justice except by the interposition of a higher power. Justice and mercy are harmonized in the cross of the blessed Saviour.

III. Justice makes a distinction. These Jews slew only their foes. They did not proceed on the method of indiscriminate slaughter. They do not appear to have touched inoffensive women and helpless children. They did not even confiscate to themselves the property of their foes. Divine justice will be exact in its distinctions. It will judge between the good and the bad, and also between bad and bad. One servant will receive many stripes, and another the few.

IV. The administrators of justice have rest when the appointed work is accomplished. The Jews had rest from their enemies. The open enemies were destroyed. The concealed enemies were afraid. There was security, if not absolute safety, to the Jewish nation. How blessed that word rest to these once persecuted, fighting, and now triumphant Jews. Rest, after all their fears and forebodings! Rest, after all their awful but necessary work of bloodshed! The warriors find rest. The statement implies that these Jews did not find supreme delight in the butchery and blood-shedding of man. They were not warriors by trade and by desire, but by the stern necessity which has no law. Sweet and welcome to them the rest after long and bitter months of fear and anxiety. To all those who fight against the enemies of the Lord there is the sure prospect of rest. Every Christian has such enemies. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," &c. But rest will come ere long. Sweet rest in heaven; Divine repose in the Father's house. The soul of the believer pants for rest in this world of

strife and turmoil. Rest from moral enemies. Rest from the strife of tongues. Rest from foes without, and fears within. Lord God, give us to taste the pure rest of heaven.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 12—16.

If she had been put upon her defence for this act, she might have urged that love for her countrymen and love for her religion, prompted her to deal thus toward the fierce enemies of both. And we shall not question the fact, that it was by these feelings she was chiefly animated, and not by the desire of revenge alone. But it must be remembered, that although this furnishes a sufficiently satisfactory explanation of her conduct, it does not justify it. It has ever been under the pretext of zeal for truth, that the fires of religious persecution have been kindled. Under this plea, for example, Popery has shed the blood of the righteous like water, and even in Protestant countries pains and penalties have been inflicted upon those who refused to adopt the form of religion patronized by the state. Intolerance has always had its arguments in self-defence; but these do not serve for its vindication. And so in the case before us, we believe most assuredly that Esther acted in all good conscience, as also did Mordecai, by whom very probably she was instructed what to do on the occasion. Yet this hinders not our regretting that she was hurried away by the spirit of revenge, rather than moved by what would have become her better—the mild and sweet influence of a forgiving heart. In defence of her religion and her people she suffered herself to act with unbecoming zeal. I would take occasion to observe here, that the great principle of toleration in religion is still imperfectly understood, and in many parts of what is called Christendom, as imperfectly practised. The principle is utterly to be repudiated, that man is not responsible to God for unbelief. He is responsible, as Christ's words imply, when he says that men "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." But on the other hand, this other principle is ever to be maintained and urged, that man is not responsible to his fellow-man, either for his belief or unbelief, and that pains and penalties to enforce religious conformity are altogether indefensible. That there is a limit to be affixed to the publication of opinions which are blasphemous, revoltingly immoral, or licentious, and subversive of all order and government, is a proposition which very few will call in question. The well-being of society demands that care be taken lest its very foundations be undermined by men whose heart is set in them to do evil. But to punish any one for holding particular views of Divine truth, or for refusing to conform to the belief and practice of the majority, is manifestly wrong. If no other arguments could be advanced for the assumption and exertion of a power to compel uniformity, these two would be sufficient: that the application of external force in matters of religion implies that those who have recourse to it must deem themselves infallible, which no man, or class of men, can rightly do; and that it evidently supposes that the claims and evidences of true religion are not so powerful of themselves as to be able without external or temporal aid to secure the approval of those to whom they are addressed. Let us hope that the world and the Church also will come to understand better than either has done hitherto, the reverence which is due to the inalienable rights of conscience, when these are pled for.—*Davidson.*

On the other side of the account this—that with emphasis it is stated that in Shushan the palace, in a great city, they slew 500 *men*. Twice it is said they slew *only men*. They were allowed to slay women and children. But as this was not necessary to their own preservation, they took the course dictated by humanity and mercy. And this stands well to their credit.

It might seem perhaps to some that

Esther herself was lacking in this humanity, when, using her great influence over her uxorious husband, and in reply to his desire to know what *now* she wished further done, assuring her that her wish should immediately be royal command — she asked not only that Haman's sons should be hanged—but that there might be *another* day of slaughter added to the first. One very vigorous objector speaks of it as "another day of butchery in the palace." But that is mere excess and exaggeration. The whole meaning of Esther's prayer is that the Jews might be allowed to continue the defence for another day, since the assault had not yet ceased.

The request was wholly reasonable, and it was at once granted. It was only in the palace, *i. e.* in the capital city, that this was necessary; throughout the provinces of the empire the fighting began and ended on the same day.—*Raleigh.*

We would give prominence to this circumstance, because some have been disposed to charge the Jews with a vindictive and merciless spirit in the conduct of this war—especially for the purpose of lowering the estimate which we have formed, and endeavoured to present, of the character of Esther, in not being satisfied with one day's slaughter, but asking the king, when the opportunity was given her, that it should be continued on the following day, and that the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons should be suspended on the gallows. If there is the appearance of severity in this, it is difficult to see that it was not warranted and necessary for the future peace of the Jews in Persia. The Jews were simply acting on their own defence. They were not the aggressors. If their enemies had wished to be let alone, they had nothing to do but to let them alone; and having risen to exterminate them, they could hardly complain if they should be themselves exterminated. To have the war prolonged over another day, on which the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons should be seen hanging on the gallows, must not be viewed in the light of pleasure in bloodshed and cruelty, but rather what was needful to protect the Jews against future trouble and single-handed resistance of assault, and, as has been suggested, "to deter other councillors, at any time, from abusing the king with false representations." Many of the ringleaders may have escaped on the first day. They may have secreted themselves in houses, or fled to the suburbs, knowing that the decrees only extended over one day. They would be enraged more than ever against the Jews, and might concert measures for private revenge. Unprotected households would not be free from invasion and spoliation. The work was not completed. But let there be a second day, accompanied with the terrible spectacle of the scaffold with its ten victims, and there would be less likelihood of any future uprising against the Jews. Moreover, we must look at the retribution on the Divine as well as the human side. If these enemies of the Jews were chiefly Amalekites, they lay under the righteous sentence of the Almighty, whose word could not fail of accomplishment. They were bitterly opposed, not only to the people of God, but to God himself, and would have rooted out his name from the earth along with those who feared and worshipped him. Mordecai and Esther were only instruments in his hand; and in the execution of the Divine purpose, and the fulfilment of prophecy, we do not find anything in their conduct which can fairly be ascribed to personal vindictiveness and vengeance, but only necessary, though severe, expedients for the protection and honour of an unjustly persecuted and reproached people. Far be it from us to ascribe the results of all war, even of defence, to the judgment of God; but when it is distinctly pointed out, in the Word of God, and though the causes should be veiled in mystery, we can only bow before his throne, saying: "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus."

But whilst much may be urged on the side of the Jews, Mordecai, and Esther, to clear them from the charge of vindictiveness and cruelty, we have a thrice-recorded declaration with regard to their

clemency. They had a right to take the property of their enemies for a spoil, The clause in Haman's edict to this effect had been incorporated in Mordecai's; but both with reference to the five hundred who were slain at Shushan on the thirteenth of the month, and the three hundred who were slain on the following day, as well as the seventy-five thousand who were slain in the provinces, we have this declaration—a declaration all the more praiseworthy and remarkable when we consider the proverbial love of gain ascribed to the Jews,—that "they laid not their hands on the prey." Just suppose that the enemies of the Jews had been victorious, and had carried out the letter of Haman's decree on all those whom they destroyed, what a sad record should we have had! Not the men only who were actually engaged in the conflict were to have been slain, but women and children also, and their whole goods were to be taken. If Haman's ten sons had got their own way, we may be sure that they would not in any particular have restricted their father's will. They would have been deaf to the pleadings of mothers and the frightened cries of little children, and would not have spared the property. In contrast with this the conduct of the Jews, Mordecai, and Esther, was merciful and humane. They only slew those who had taken arms against themselves; and, as regards the property, though they had authority to take it, yet did they not appropriate anything. The wives and children of such as were slain would have need of it. They would show that it was not a war of self-aggrandisement, malice, or covetousness, but a conflict forced upon them for their own preservation. If it had been vengeance which they sought in the second day's conflict and the hanging of Haman's sons, they had an opportunity of taking it in a far more effectual and grievous manner; but what they wanted was simply present safety, and some guarantee for the future. They stopped there, and by their conduct set a notable example to contending nations. All war is to be deplored; but more deplorable still, the reckless waste of the property of the vanquished. In certain cases it may be necessary in order to obtain terms of peace, but when it is wanton and revengeful it must receive the just censure of every generous heart. By letting alone the spoil, which must have been great, and which they might easily have seized and legally claimed, the Jews must have commended themselves to the peaceable and right-minded of the population of Persia,—"but they laid not their hands on the prey."—*McEwen.*

Let it be granted to the Jews, &c. The enemies at Shushan could not be all caught the first day; lest those that lurked should hereafter prove troublesome to the Church by hatching new plots, she begs that they also may receive condign punishment. And Haman's sons are hanged up for example. This she requested not out of any private and personal spleen to any, but for the glory of God and the Church's peace. Had her aims been otherwise than good, her good actions could not have showed her a good woman. For, though a good aim doth not make a bad action good, as we see in Uzzah; yet a bad aim maketh a good action bad, as we see in Jehu. Lavater's note may not here be let slip: the diligence that Esther used in rooting out her temporal enemies should quicken us to do the like to our spiritual, viz. those evil affections, motions, and passions, that war against the soul. These be our Medes and Persians, with whom we must make no truce, but maintain a constant deadly feud, till we have mastered and mortified them all, for till that be done effectually we must never look to have true peace, either within ourselves or with others.—*Trapp.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. VERSES 17—28.

A NATIONAL MEMORIAL.

There are some who appear to frown upon all national memorials, as savouring of the Old Testament dispensation, and as belonging to the childhood of the race. But all childishness has not been yet eliminated from humanity. And we do not know that it would be well for us to put away all that belongs to the child-nature. Our Saviour teaches that we must become as little children. If the custom of observing national memorials belongs to primitive and less enlightened ages it is certainly one that does not easily pass away. We see no reason why it should. The family has its memorials, the nation has its memorials. All religions, the simplest as well as the most elaborate, have their memorials. They are founded upon the instincts of our humanity. They serve most useful purposes. They tend to keep alive the memory of great public events in a way that could not be so successfully accomplished by any other method. This national memorial of the Purim has not been without its beneficial influences.

I. This national memorial was established by supreme authority. Mordecai was now the prime minister, and he wrote these things and sent letters to stablish this among them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly. This was done on the concurrence of Esther the queen and Ahasuerus the king. Those that are in high places in the kingdom should set themselves to establish wise customs and salutary memorials. Such a custom and such a memorial was that of the feast of Purim. Even modern rulers are not always wise in this respect. They ought to be cautious in all their proceedings. Let them not establish any memorial, nor sanction any custom, that does not tend to the welfare of the people. Let them remember how the influence of those in high places percolates through all classes of society, and acts either injuriously or beneficially. How awfully responsible is the position of those who are placed on high either in Church or in State! Well may we earnestly pray for God's guidance and blessing to and upon all the great ones of earth.

II. This national memorial was approved by a grateful people. The Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them. We can easily understand and picture to ourselves the gratitude of these people on account of their great deliverance, and how readily they would concur in the establishment of this feast of Purim. Happy is it when rulers find a ready response to a wise decision in the feelings of their subjects. Decrees and customs in order to be permanently beneficial must be heartily received by an enlightened and virtuous people. And if the people do not at first readily receive, and do not see the propriety of any measure, they must be taught and educated up to the proper standard. It may be correct that some few of the Jewish elders objected to this memorial. But this is only what often occurs. Where was the good custom and good doctrine yet that did not meet with opponents? However, we must hold on our way till all enemies are overcome. If the thing be good and true it must finally stand and be victorious. Be sure you are right, and then stand to the right in the face of all enemies, and triumph must ultimately arrive.

III. This national memorial was sanctioned by the marvellous nature of the events celebrated. These were the days when the Jews rested from their enemies, and this was the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day. Here was fitting reason for celebration. Well might they feel grateful for the great benefits conferred. These events were marvellous. The deliverance could only have been effected by Divine interposition. They would not merely celebrate the fact that a month of expected sorrow was

turned into a month of joy, but also the marvellous manner by which it was brought about. We too may celebrate the month which has been turned for us from sorrow to joy, and from mourning to a good day, and the marvellous manner by which it was accomplished. We have our Christmas memorial which rings its joy bells through time, and tells the advent of our great Deliverer. We have our Good Friday memorial which rings its mournful and yet hopeful sounds. We have our Easter memorial which tells of the once crucified but now risen and triumphant Redeemer. Let us penitently and believingly celebrate these great events of Gospel history.

IV. This national memorial was hallowed by the manner of its celebration. They were to be days of feasting and joy, but not we presume of gluttony and of drunkenness. This is too often the modern notion of feasting, and modern fashion of observing festal occasions. Very, very sad it is to see that our most sacred religious festivals are desecrated by extravagant and sinful licentiousness. Religious people must check this not by ascetic austerity but by joy. It was a month of joy. Let us show that moderation and religious sobriety are helpful to a joy that is lasting and that spreads itself through all life's trials and difficulties. But the most attractive part of this celebration is found in the fact that it was a time of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. What a wide diffusion of happiness! What a season for the expansion of the spirit of benevolence! What a time for the holy enlargement of the nature! Here is a blessed communism that cannot be productive of evil results! It is to all a celestial feast. The rich taste the luxury of doing good. The poor taste the rich wine of benevolence. The rich sent both to the rich and the poor, and thus the poor are not pauperized. They do not lose a sense of their proper manhood.

V. This national memorial was preserved by a wise method. The Jews took methods to have this feast of Purim made known and observed to and by every family, every province, every city, and every generation. Here we have on this subject home-missionary work. Let us teach our own people. The Jews may be considered as too exclusive. However, while we look to the nations beyond we must not neglect our own nation. In these days we may reasonably feel that our own beloved nation is not growing more religious. How vast the heathenism of our large towns and cities! Yea, how much of ignorance in our rural districts! Here we have our duty towards the children enforced. The seed are to be instructed. The institution is to be made known from generation to generation. It is by the wise and prayerful training of children that we must hope to improve the nation, and leave behind a better and more glorious England than that which we found. Let us gird ourselves afresh to the holy and benevolent enterprise.

VI. This national memorial is perpetuated with a good result. These days of Purim had not failed from among the Jews, nor has the memorial of them perished from their seed. However much the Jews may be degenerated in the manner in which they celebrate this memorial, yet the fact that it is celebrated speaks to us of the antiquity and authenticity of these wonderful records. The public observance of certain customs is a more convincing argument and a more powerful and more easily understood demonstration than the ablest books on the evidences. A memorial does not require much studying. A book requires much studying, and sometimes in certain classes of minds raises more doubts than it settles. We do not under-rate good books. Both books and memorials have their place. Let us wisely perpetuate good institutions. Let each one raise the irresistible memorial of a holy life. This can never be refuted. Ye are our epistles. Oh that the Lord would write more and more of these glorious epistles.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 17—28.

And of sending portions one to another. To the rich they sent in courtesy, to the poor in charity, and both these to testify their thankfulness to God for their lives, liberties, and estates, so lately and graciously restored unto them.—*Trapp.*

We can well receive or retain good church ceremonies, if only they are not opposed to the Word of God, in view of our Christian freedom. Even the holidays ordered by the authorities of one's country should be celebrated in a becoming manner.—*Starke.*

The festivals that the people of the Lord as such celebrate, have quite a different purpose from those of heathendom. Ahasuerus aimed to show the riches of his glorious kingdom. God's people desire first of all to praise God's grace. They would give thanks for the gifts bestowed upon them. They would secure and keep what they already had by rendering thanks and praise to God as its author. Theirs are feasts of gratitude. Hence these also have a different character from the others. The pious cannot manifest their spirit of gratitude to God for all his benefits without also proving this by benefaction to their brethren in the faith. The love of God has kindled love to their fellows in their hearts; this would prove itself in deeds of kindness and benevolence. They would confess their allegiance to God as to one mild and kindly; they would else deny him were they not to give way, on their part, to mildness and kindliness. Their festivals, therefore, are seasons of refreshing, but especially so to the poorer brethren among them. At the same time there is joined to their spirit of rejoicing one of great seriousness. They cannot enjoy their deliverance without also looking back upon the sorrows that preceded it. They can only appreciate the former by taking a full view of the latter. They do not forget that though salvation is theirs, still there are even yet abundant cause for sorrow and grief. The chief cause of this is the remains of sin in them. As the Mazzoth (unleavened) days are followed by the serious Paschal sacrifice, and as the joy of the feast of tabernacles is preceded by the repentance of the fast of the day of atonement, so also here the joyous feast of Purim is connected in a preparation of fasting and mourning. In eternity also will this transition hold true.—*Lange.*

Now the feast of Purim was to be observed. And of this let us see—

I. What was here enjoined, which was very good, that they should make it—1. A day of cheerfulness, a day of feasting and joy; and a feast was made for laughter. When God gives us cause to rejoice, why should we not express our joy? 2. A day of generosity, sending portions one to another, in token of their pleasantness and mutual respect, and their being knit by this and other public common dangers and deliverances so much the closer to each other in love. Friends have their goods in common. 3. A day of charity, sending gifts to the poor. It is not to our kinsmen and rich neighbours only that we are to send tokens, but to the poor and the maimed. Those that have received mercy must, in token of their gratitude, show mercy; and there never wants occasion, for the poor we have always with us. Thanksgiving and almsgiving should go together, that, when we are rejoicing and blessing God, the heart of the poor may rejoice with us, and their loins may bless us.

II. What was added to this, which was much better. They always, at the feast, read the whole story over in the synagogue each day, and put up three prayers to God: in the first of which they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this Divine service; in the second they thank him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors; in the third they praise him that they have lived to observe another festival in memory of it. So Bishop Patrick.

III. What it has since degenerated to, which is much worse. Their own writers acknowledge that this feast is

commonly celebrated among them in gluttony, and drunkenness, and excess of riot. Their Talmud says expressly, that in the feast of Purim a man should drink till he knows not the difference between *Cursed be Haman* and *Blessed be Mordecai*. See what the corrupt and wicked nature of man often brings that to which was at first well-intended: here is a religious feast turned into a carnival, a perfect revel, as wakes are among us. Nothing more purifies the heart and adorns religion than holy joy; nothing more pollutes the heart and reproaches religion than carnal mirth and sensual pleasure. What is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.—*Matthew Henry.*

The celebration of the victory necessarily took place on different days in the city of Shushan and in the provinces. As there were two days of slaughter in Shushan, the triumph was not celebrated till the fifteenth day; but as in the lesser cities and villages of the empire, the permission granted by the king of a second day was not known, it was celebrated on the fourteenth day of Adar. They rested from labour. Some must have been in mourning; for, though no mention is made of the losses of the Jews in the fierce warfare, it is too much to suppose that they could all have escaped. But even those who had suffered the loss of relatives and friends would find compensation for it in the great and general deliverance which had been wrought, and would hardly refrain from joining with their kinsfolk and neighbours in their joy. They feasted one with another, and gave expression to the gladness which filled their hearts in thanksgiving and praise. The day was observed as "a good day," not in the sense of mere worldly mirth and jollity; but, along with "feasting and gladness," there would be the remembrance of the Lord, who had so marvellously and mightily interposed for their own preservation and the destruction of their enemies. The Jews were always ready to give God the praise of their success in war, and as, in this instance, they had sought the Lord in their perplexity and sorrow, so would they now yield to him the glory of their triumph. In proof of their gratitude to him they extended their generosity to the poor, and such as were not in circumstances to make a feast for themselves. They sent "portions one to another"—meat from their tables to such as were in need,—that no one might be wanting in the means of enjoyment. Even to the present day, the Jews have a rule, that a collection of money should be made, at this time of the year, for the benefit of the poor, that they may provide for themselves the things necessary to make a feast. Verily, that is "a good day" on which the hearts of the people of God are warmed with gratitude and praise to him who is the dispenser of all good, and feel themselves so bound together as to be interested in the supply of each other's wants and comforts. After a different fashion from this the world celebrates its victories. It may expend large sums of money in the roar of cannon and magnificent display, whilst the poor are left struggling in penury and want. But the Church of God, through all her members, should feel knit one to another by the ties of a common kindred and fraternal affection, prompting kindness to the poor and the suffering, and an honest benevolence for their relief. In our feasting and gladness, because of some signal victory in providence, we should remember those who, on account of their need, cannot rejoice with us in our joy. So are we now presented with a scene which is widely separated from the world—men regarding themselves as members of the same family, concerned for each other's happiness, ministering to each other's wants, and as though surrounding a common table:—"A day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another."

Now, it does appear strange that the people of God should be represented here and elsewhere in Scripture—notably after the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea—rejoicing over the slaughter and destruction of thousands of their fellow-creatures. One might have supposed that the scene would rather have been contemplated with subdued silence and regret. If the

rejoicing was occasioned simply by the satisfaction afforded by national and personal revenge, it would only have merited reproof; but when we reflect that these same feelings of jubilation and gladness are shared in and loudly expressed by the redeemed in heaven, at the overthrow of God's enemies, we touch upon a very solemn and awful aspect of the subject. The will of man becomes so thoroughly harmonized and identified with the will of God, as actually to rejoice in the darkest providences and heaviest judgments. We cannot now, indeed, venture to interpret all events, which are beneficial to ourselves and disastrous to others, as the judgment of God upon them for our sakes. It was different in the days of the prophets, when a Divine intimation was given to this effect. But the redeemed will have such a clearness of apprehension in this respect as shall prevent the possibility of mistake. Accordingly, in the terrible events of the latter days, and in the final judgment itself, they are depicted in the Book of Revelation as bursting forth into song and rejoicing in the God of judgment. Most thoroughly do they identify their own cause with God's glory, and are constrained to rejoice over all which promotes the exhibition of it. As the judgments of God upon his enemies, as well as his goodness toward his people, are for the manifestation of his glory, they are moved thereby to adoring song. The tempest moves our adoration of God as well as the calm; the thunder, roaring among the mountains, as well as zephyr breezes gently shaking the leaves of the forest; the whirlwind, with its terror, as well as the dew with its refreshing. And when we pass from the physical to the moral, it is only our present sympathy with sin which leads us to rejoice more in God, in those dealings which are smooth and pleasant, than in those which are crushing and retributive.

There is nothing which so fills the believing soul with adoration as the cross of Christ. There do we see the flood-gates of Divine wrath opened wide, that the penalty of sin may be exhausted on our Divine Surety and Redeemer. And because that stupendous interposition was for the fullest display of the Divine perfections and glory, we surround that cross with our praises.

What we now see, however, only as through a glass, darkly, the redeemed see clearly in the light of immortality; so that, when those who are at deadly war with God upon the earth, who have spurned at offered mercy, and turned a deaf ear to all the entreaties of redeeming love, and who would deny the name of God, and bid defiance to his government, are met by the Lord of Hosts on their own terms, and utterly discomfited, it cannot be wondered at that the redeemed, who had pleaded for this very thing upon the earth, and waited for it in hope in heaven, should join their hearts and voices in the praise of God. There must have been something resplendent and mighty in the angels who fell, and were cast out of heaven; but yet, on the putting down of this rebellion in their ranks, there must have been joy and gladness in the breasts of those who stood firm in their allegiance to God and holiness. And when the wicked are at last destroyed, and consigned to their own place, the regrets of the redeemed at the absence of some whom they had known upon the earth shall be silenced, and more than counterbalanced, in the maintenance of God's throne, and the uneclipsed splendour of his glory. We have our war-songs, recording our victories in battle, and delight in singing them; and shall it not be that the followers of the Lamb shall find delight in singing those songs which shall record the Redeemer's triumph over sin and Satan, and all his and our enemies?

Ah! the thought of that day does involve contingencies and consequences which we cannot help now contemplating with fear and trembling. It shall be the celebration of the grandest victory which perhaps the universe shall ever have witnessed. But on which side shall we individually stand? In every Amalekite's and enemy's home through the Persian empire there would be lamentation and mourning during those days when the Jews were jubilant; and whilst the redeemed are rejoicing in the

victory of their Lord, and their own triumph through faith in his name, in the ranks of the wicked and finally lost there shall only be weeping and wailing, remorse and despair. It is now left for us to determine whether or no we are on the Lord's side. The opportunity is given to us, and according to the improvement which we make of it shall be our place and portion on that great and terrible day of the Lord. To be numbered among the redeemed, and have a part in the celebration of their victory, should be enough to fire our ambition, quicken our zeal, and call into action all our energies. Then shall that day, with all its terrors and partings, be to us "a day of joy and gladness, and a good day."—*McEwen.*

As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. All things work together for good to the people of God, by promoting their happiness, as well as their holiness. Their toils sweeten the rest which succeeds them. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, although he should sup sparingly before he retires to rest. The tears which the Christian must often shed are remembered with joy, when they are wiped away by returning prosperity. Mordecai wished the Jews to be ever mindful of their sorrows, that their joy might be full.

The days of Purim were intended to be days of feasting and gladness. In the season of their distress they would scarcely be able to eat that bread which was necessary to the preservation of their life; when they thought of their deliverance, and of the mercy of God in their deliverance, they would eat their bread with gladness, and drink their wine with a merry heart.

These days were to be "days of sending portions one to another." Their common danger and their common deliverance would endear them one to another, and open their hearts to mutual kindness. How much more ought our common salvation by Christ from our general misery bind the hearts of Christians to one another! We were all involved in guilt and ruin by sin, and the same sin was the source of misery to us all. We are all redeemed by the same precious blood; we are all saved by the same Almighty arm. Let our common joy in Christ's salvation overflow in mutual love. If we are penetrated with the love of Christ, will we not love all those who are the objects of the same exceeding riches of grace!

"Sending of gifts to the poor," was to be another of the duties of this happy day. There might be many poor Jews who were not able to afford an entertainment for this day of joy. But Mordecai would have the poor rejoice as well as the rich. Although we find our circumstances unprosperous, we must not, on that account, reckon that we have no right, or that we are not bound, to rejoice in public mercies. That the poor may not be tempted to repine when others rejoice, as if they were cut off from the public happiness, we should be ready to communicate to them a share of our blessings, especially when our hearts overflow with joy in God's goodness to ourselves. Why should the rich eat their morsel alone, whilst others are pining with hunger! If you desire the continuance of your own happiness from Divine mercy, endeavour to diffuse it by wise liberality. Every expression of Divine goodness to ourselves is a new obligation laid upon us to do good, to those especially who have most need of our bounty. Above all, the redemption by Christ binds us to be merciful.*

And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them. They cheerfully promised to comply with Mordecai's wishes, both from a regard to his authority, and from a lively sense of the mercy bestowed upon them. It is a happy thing when superiors require nothing from their inferiors but what themselves see to be just and reasonable.

Mordecai's letters could not but have a mighty influence upon a nation who were indebted to him for their lives.

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

He could not be blamed for bringing them into the dangers which they had escaped, because it was his steadfast adherence to his duty which provoked Haman's wrath. But he deserved no less praise than Esther herself for their preservation. Gratitude will induce us to do many things for those who have been the instruments of preserving our lives. What shall we render to the Author of our lives, and to him who hath redeemed our lives from destruction?

Because Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them. The remembrance of Haman's fearful plot against all the Jews powerfully instigated them to observe those days of joy that were appointed by Mordecai. When they considered how formidable the enemy was, and how bent upon their destruction, they could not think of their deliverance without surprise, and joy, and thankfulness.

It would be useful to us for increasing our joy in the Lord, to think upon those enemies of the Church that have often brought her into extreme dangers, that we may see the glory of that grace and power to which she is indebted for existence. If we think upon the Pharaohs, the Hamans, the Sennacheribs, the Antiochuses, the Diocletians, the beast with seven heads and ten horns, that have opened their mouths like dragons to swallow up the people of God, will we not see good reason still to sing that song of ancient times? "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say; many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me."

Haman was the cause of much terror to the Jews, but this terror ended in triumphs and joyful feasts. Unhappy are the enemies of the people of God. They labour for the profit of those whom they hate. Amongst those things that are made subservient to the advantage of the people of God, are to be ranked all the devices of their most malicious enemies, Satan himself, their greatest enemy, not excepted. Sennacherib was a tremendous enemy of Judah, and struck terror into the minds of the most valiant of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But what was the event of his formidable invasion? Disgrace and ruin to himself, gladness and joyful feasts to the Jews; as Isaiah foretold, when he was marching along in all the pride of his heart at the head of his innumerable army, collected from his extended dominions: "They had a song, as in the night, when an holy assembly is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel."

But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. In Mordecai's letters he puts the Jews in mind, not only of Haman's plot against them, but of the means also by which it was disconcerted. Let us observe and call to mind the procedure of the providence of God in the works which he accomplishes for his Church, or for ourselves in particular. Every step of his going of majesty deserves to be remarked and admired. They are all beautified with wisdom and grace.

Who could have expected that Esther, whom the king had not desired to see for thirty days, should obtain such favour in his eyes as to turn his wrath against his favourite Haman, whose face he saw every day with smiles? Yet, when Esther came before the king, the mischief of Haman was turned upon himself, and he and his sons were hanged on the gallows. Let us do our duty, and leave the consequence to God. Without the protection of his providence Esther might have fallen under the sentence of that cruel law, which made the king inaccessible to his subjects. But her life was preserved by that God to whom she had poured out her soul in fasting. She did great things and prevailed; and her name shall live to the

latest posterity in the records of those heroes and heroines who "wrought righteousness, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

"Wherever this gospel is preached," said Jesus, "there shall also this that this woman (who poured precious ointment on his head) hath done be told for a memorial of her." Mordecai hoped that what Esther had done would be told in every succeeding generation, to her honour, and for the encouragement of women, as well as men, to do every thing in their power to promote the interests of the Church. Women are too ready to say, What can we do to serve the public interest? our mode of life confines us to our own families. But Esther is not the only woman that has gained just praises by her public spirit. Lemuel's mother taught her son to be a blessing to his people, and has left lessons behind her, by which women, to the end of the world, will be taught to excel in virtue. To Priscilla, as well as to Aquila, all the Churches of the Gentiles gave thanks for what she did for Paul; and many of them had reason to thank her for what she did to Apollos likewise. Males and females are one in Christ Jesus. They are equally saved by his grace; they are equally obliged to promote his interests in the exercise of virtue, and the practice of duties suited to their respective situations; and women, as well as men, have sometimes found singular opportunities of service to their generation, which they could not safely neglect to improve.

Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur. The very name of these days afforded an useful lesson to the people of God, and might have afforded an useful lesson to their enemies. It appeared from the event of the lots, which gave name to this day, that although time and chance happen to all men, yet nothing is contingent to God. Chance is under his management, and those things which to us appear most accidental, are managed by his providence to accomplish his designs of mercy to them that love him, and of vengeance to his enemies. Why, then, should the friends of God give themselves any anxious trouble about the most uncertain events? The whole disposal of the lot is of him. Haman's lots directed his measure to his own destruction, and the salvation of Judah. —*Lawson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 29—32.

Important Letters.

This is the day of writing many letters, but it is not the day for writing those elaborate and important letters which were written in the days of our forefathers. Those letters live as masterpieces of composition. It would be difficult to collect letters now-a-days that would be worth printing. Here in these verses we have the record of important letters written by Esther the queen and Mordecai the Jew.

I. **The importance of letters may be measured by the earnestness of the writers.** Esther and Mordecai wrote with all authority, or with all strength, viz. of spirit and of speech, of affection and expression. We have so many letters to write now that we cannot put all our strength into every letter; but when letters are important, then we should seek to put forth all strength. Earnestness will show itself in writing as well as in speaking. If we desire people to read what we have written we must write with earnestness. This will give power to our compositions and distinctness to our utterances.

II. **The importance of letters may be measured by the spirit of the writing.** Esther and Mordecai wrote with words of peace and truth. Follow peace with all men. Speak the words of peace and of truth in letters. Good may

be done by letter-writing. Sometimes we have neither power nor opportunity to speak to a brother about his spiritual state. A letter affords a good vehicle for the word of warning and of instruction. A letter may reach and bless him that could not be reached by word of mouth. A letter written with earnestness and with prayer will often carry conviction to the soul. Much good has been thus accomplished, and still is this method of usefulness available. Words of peace and truth. Let such be the nature of our communications. Sincere utterances, truthful words. Our age wants such words. In this gabbling age words are too cheap. We ought to be as careful not to circulate false words as we are not to circulate bad coin. When will the great importance of words be rightly understood and estimated?

III. The importance of letters may be measured by the subject-matter of the communication. These letters of Esther and of Mordecai confirmed the days and the matters of Purim. They were on subjects of highest importance to the Jewish nation. They decreed for their souls and for their seed the matters of the fastings and their cry. The conflicts of the soul are subjects of the highest importance; but they are too often overlooked. In all ages materialism gains too much the ascendancy. Soul concerns are put in the background; the matters of the fastings and their cry are not deemed matters worthy of supreme attention. Still those letters that touch the essence of things are the most influential. The letters of the apostles hold a supreme position on this very account. Their subject-matter testifies to their divinity. They thus commend themselves as inspired to the unprejudiced mind. Let us read these New Testament epistles, for they are the most important of all letters.

IV. The essence of important letters will not be lost. These letters sent unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, have not been handed down, but we may be assured that all which is essential in those letters is preserved. The decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book. What book it is impossible to say. Certainly it does not seem satisfactory to declare in the Book of Esther, as forming part of the canonical books. If this be so, then this thirty-second verse and the tenth chapter do not properly belong to the inspired books. The verses are then a mere postscript, written by what hand and with what authority we cannot determine. To make the expression, "it was written in the book," an argument for the canonicity of Esther, is far-fetched. We may concur with Keil when he says, "The book in which this decree was written cannot mean the writing of Esther, mentioned in verse 29, but some written document concerning Purim which has not come down to us, though used as an authority by the author of the present book;" or we may refer it to the book of the Chronicles of Media and Persia, since it is mentioned in other passages. Though the written document is lost, yet the essence of the document remains. We may then believe that all which is worth preserving will be preserved and handed down from generation to generation. Let us not weep over burnt libraries and destroyed manuscripts. God watches over the truth. His Word cannot be destroyed. If all that had been destroyed could be gathered up again, if there could be a resurrection of dead books, and diligent inquiry made, we are persuaded that there would be no substantial addition to the treasury of the truth. The fire burns, but the gold and the silver of everlasting truth must outlast every conflagration.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 29—32.

And the decree of Esther confirmed, &c. Dux fœmina facti. Money was coined in the year 1588 in honour of Queen Elizabeth, with that posy inscribed. The like may be here said of Queen Esther; yea, we may add that in the Gospel, spoken concerning another: Whenever this history should be read in

all the world, this that she hath done should be spoken to her eternal commendation.

And it was written in the book. Tremellius rendereth it thus: "When, therefore, the edict of Esther had confirmed these things, it was written in this book." Lyra and others thus: "She requested the wise men of that age, that they would reckon this history for Holy Writ." If it be meant of any other public record which the Jews then had, it is lost, as are likewise some other pieces which never were any part of the Holy Scriptures; for God, by his providence, ever took care and course that no one hair of the sacred head should fall to the ground. The unsound conceit of Pelican here is by no means to be admitted, viz. that this latter part of the chapter, from verse 25 to the end, came from the pen of some other man, not guided by the Spirit of God, and that because here is no mention made of praising God at this feast, or stirring up one another to trust in him. For we know that all Scripture is of Divine inspiration, and it is to be presumed that those things were done at such solemnities, though it be not recorded in each particular.—*Trapp.*

And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth. When we are exalted above our brethren, we are too ready to forget them and ourselves, as if the change of our condition had raised us to a higher rank of creatures. Mordecai and his adoptive daughter were not negligent in the exercise of their authority for purposes that appeared to them good and salutary to the nation; but they still retained their humbleness of mind, and their kind affections to their kindred. They sent these letters to all the hundred and twenty-seven provinces "with words of truth and peace;" with expressions of the warmest benevolence. Nor were these expressions, like many of our mutual compliments, merely dictated by a politeness which too often conceals a perfect indifference to our neighbour's welfare under good words and fair speeches. Their words were words of truth as well as of peace, when they expressed their desires and prayers, that the Lord might bless his people with peace.

Let men maintain that authority which God hath given them, that they may attain the ends for which it is given them, but let it be always tempered with charity and gentleness. Paul, in his epistles, asserts his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ; but he writes with words of peace and truth when he prays for grace and peace to the churches from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. At the motion of Mordecai, the Jews were unanimously determined to observe the festival, and to enjoin the observance of it to their posterity. The Jews were confirmed in their resolution by the second letter of Mordecai, in conjunction with Esther. And one consideration which would dispose them to observe the commemoration of this deliverance with joy and exultation, was, that they had fasted and cried for it under the pressure of the danger. They could not eat their ordinary food. They cried out with exceeding loud and bitter cries. They fasted and cried unto the Lord, and he heard the voice of their supplications.

Spring is the pleasantest season of the year, because it follows the dreary desolations and the piercing cold of winter. These days of health are especially delightful which follow days of extreme sickness, when we had the sentence of death in ourselves. Remember the dismal thoughts that engrossed your minds, the terrifying apprehensions that embittered your troubles, and the exquisite felicity which you promised to yourselves, if it should please God, beyond your expectations, to send you relief. Thus will the troubles you have endured spread happiness in the retrospect, over the remaining part of your life. You

still must meet with trials; but you will be thankful that they are so light and easy to be borne, when they are compared with those which you have formerly endured.

Have you fasted, and cried unto the Lord, and has he graciously inclined his ear to your complaints? With what joy and peace ought you to recollect the mercy which has preserved you from going down to the chambers of the grave, perhaps to the regions of destruction! David will teach you what improvement to make of your fasting and cries, when the Lord has been pleased to grant you the deliverance which you supplicated. "I love the Lord, because he heard my voice and supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him so long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me: I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book. The high and beloved name of Esther was sufficient to establish the decree of Purim. She had been the saviour of the Jews. At the risk of her life she had preserved theirs. What do we not owe to him who, not only by endangering his life, but by giving up himself to an accursed death, hath delivered us from the wrath to come!

"And it was written in the book" of the Jewish institutions, or in the register of their transactions. Books are necessary for recording those things that are intended for the use of posterity. Were it not for books we would all be children in understanding. Let us carefully improve those things that were written aforetimes for our learning, especially those things which Divine wisdom hath directed the holy men of God to record for our benefit.

The feast of Purim is still observed, though not in a manner agreeable to Esther's intention. The observance of this and other festivals of the Jews, from the most ancient times, is attended with this great advantage, that it affords a convincing argument of the truth of those facts which they were designed to commemorate, when we take this into the account, that these fasts were recorded in books at the time when they were instituted, which are still extant. The observance of the ancient Jewish feasts is a public declaration of their firm belief of the Old Testament Scriptures. This is one of the most powerfully rational arguments of the truth of our holy religion. If the Old Testament Scriptures are true, the Messiah expected by the Jews is come long ago into the world; and none but Jesus of Nazareth can be that Messiah. Thus the most determined enemies of Jesus give a decided, though indirect, testimony that he is the Son of God, by attesting the truth and Divine authority of those ancient Scriptures that testify of him. —*Lawson.*

CHAPTER X.

CRITICAL NOTES] **And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea]** Tribute—a levy, tribute-service—means a tax levied, and for this reason that tribute-service belonged to products or moneys which were rendered to the king. Keil thinks the author wished briefly to indicate at the close whence Ahasuerus derived the means to support such magnificent state as was described at the beginning of our book. But the only safe answer is given us by the manner in which the author, in ver. 1, connects the power of Ahasuerus with the greatness

of Mordecai: the greater the power of Ahasuerus, the more powerful the dignity of Mordecai. The land and the isles of the sea shows the extent of the monarch's sway. 2.] The author does not designate either the wealth or the power of Ahasuerus or of Mordecai more minutely, but rather refers for particulars on both to the archives of the empire of the Medes and Persians. It is enough for him to be able to refer to these, and it is especially honourable for Mordecai's cause, that even the archives of heathen kings must remember him. 3.] Here the author must once more give prominence to the fact that Mordecai, the Jew, who for him stands as the representative of Judaism, stood next to King Ahasuerus, since therefrom it follows that the greatness of the one was also that of the other. "The second" here means the first minister, and hence indicates that Mordecai was great among the Jews, and favoured among the multitude of his brethren, *i. e.* that he really occupied a representative position among them. The additional sentence also, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed, is quite in place here, in so far as it indicates that what came to Mordecai also redounded to the good of his entire people.—*Lange.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH. Verses 1, 3.

A Good Government.

Happy the people that live under the government of Queen Victoria, for it is, upon the whole, the best government that the world has ever seen. There is the due balance of powers. There may be evils, but there are fewer evils than can be found in any other government, past or present. It is not contended that it is perfect, for perfection is not to be expected in this sinful, selfish, and imperfect world. How good our government is may be seen by instituting a contrast between it and some ancient forms. The Persian government was far from perfect. No one would desire to see it repeated. It is not here to be placed before us as a model. But it is possible for these verses to gather together some of the characteristics of a good government. Let each subject strive to mend himself, and seek the wealth of his people, and thus he will subserve the best interests of the state at large.

I. **A good government has a wise system of taxation.** This is needful for the purposes of government. Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. He could not have managed without such a tribute. It may have been oppressive. A larger tribute may have been exacted than was actually needful, for he was luxurious, and had to support many retainers. A certain outward state seems essential to royalty in order to maintain a proper position. The incidence of taxation should fall equally and justly upon all classes, and upon all parts of the empire. The rich can bear a proportionately larger tax than the poor. The absolute necessaries of life should be free from taxation, as they are in Great Britain. Taxes ought to be freely paid, for this is the command of the New Testament. "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," &c. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

II. **A good government makes its power felt.** Weak and changeable as was Ahasuerus, still it is found that he was capable of acts of power and of might. Every good government is powerful, both at home and abroad. It must be, and will be, a terror to evil-doers; for to this end are all governments instituted. We can easily conceive that governments would not be required if there were no evil-doers. How wonderful it is that this small island should be so powerful amongst the nations of the earth. It may be taken as a sign of God's favour to our nation. It becomes us to appreciate our blessings, and be careful not to abuse our privileges. We must endeavour to use our power for the glory of God and for the highest welfare of the nations of the earth. May God in his mercy still preserve our nation, and forgive our national wrong-doings, and make it a still greater power for good.

III. **A good government places good men in office.** At last Ahasuerus has a good man for prime minister. Ahasuerus advanced Mordecai to greatness. This

Jew became next unto the king. Mordecai was not a good man without capacity; his piety was not a cloak for imbecility. A mere outward profession of goodness ought not to be the passport to high places, either in Church or in State. A pious fool may be as injurious to the state as a wicked philosopher. A man, in order to be prime minister, ought to be both intellectually and morally strong. From all that we read in this record, Mordecai appears to be the right man in the right place when he was placed next unto King Ahasuerus. Oh for truly good and great men sitting at the helm of affairs, both civil and ecclesiastical! Men of commanding intellects, of noble hearts and true; men that dare to be and to do the right; men that shrink with abhorrence from all meanness and wrong-doing.

IV. A good government promotes the welfare of the people. Mordecai, as prime minister, sought and promoted the wealth or the welfare of his people, and through them the welfare of the people at large. This word "wealth" indicates a degenerating tendency. A man is now wealthy who possesses houses, lands, and money. Certainly outward prosperity will be the outcome of a good government. A country morally degenerate will not long remain prosperous. When vice increases, then the country declines; so that a government must seek the suppression of vice and the development of virtue if it is successfully to promote the wealth of the people. Godliness is after all great gain, both to the individual and to the community. A good government cannot be atheistic. Infidel rulers cannot increase the wealth of the people in any respect. National safety must consist in national acknowledgment of the Divine supremacy. Fear God; honour the king.

V. A good government strives to preserve peace. Mordecai, the prime minister, spoke peace to all his seed. We may be assured that the stern, repressive measures related in this narrative were intended for the promotion of peace and of the greater interests of the whole nation; for Mordecai was not the man to speak peace while war was in his heart. It may be sometimes necessary while speaking peace to carry out those measures that appear contrary to pacific professions. 'Blessed are the peacemakers." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." There are then limitations; there are impossible men. Still, better to suffer a little than to destroy peace. But never let a so-called love of peace induce to the sacrifice of principle. The apostles were lovers of peace, but they produced hatred and commotion. The gospel is a pacificator, and yet it is a great divider.

VI. A good government is acceptable to a virtuous and enlightened people. Mordecai, the chief power in this Persian kingdom, was great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren. A government is firm as it is founded upon the respect and affection of the well-conducted portion of the subjects. We say well-conducted, for licentiousness spurns all government. Wickedness desires lawlessness; rebellion is for the most part wickedness. Blessed is the fact that our throne is buttressed by so many faithful and attached subjects. God's government, rightly understood, will be acceptable to all people. It is a righteous government. In serving God we serve the best and most glorious King. Christ Jesus our King is wise, judicious, and loving. Happy are those who serve him on earth, and who shall be called to serve him when he shall have put down all opposing forces, and shall sway the glorious and beneficent sceptre of universal empire.

Suggestive Comments on Verses 1, 2.

Mordecai was good, very good, for he did good. This goodness made him truly great, and then his greatness gave him an opportunity of doing so much the more good. When the king advanced him—1. He did not disown his people, the Jews, nor was he ashamed of his relation to them, though they were strangers and captives, dispersed and despised. Still he wrote himself Mordecai the Jew, and therefore no doubt adhered to the Jew's religion, by

the observances of which he distinguished himself, and yet it was no hindrance to his preferment, nor looked upon as a blemish to him. 2. He did not seek his own wealth, or the raising of an estate for himself and his family, which is the chief most aim at when they get into great places at court; but he consulted the welfare of his people, and made it his business to advance that. His power, his wealth, and all his interests in the king and queen he improved for the public good. 3. He not only did good, but he did it in a humble, condescending way; was so easy of access, courteous and affable in his behaviour, and spoke peace to all that made their application to him. Doing good works is the best and chief thing expected from those who have wealth and power; but giving good words is also commendable, and makes the good deed more acceptable. 4. He did not side with any one party of his people against another, nor make some his favourites, while the rest were neglected and crushed; but, whatever differences there were among them, he was a common father to them all, recommended himself to the multitude of his brethren, not despising the crowd, and spoke peace to all their seed, without distinction. Thus making himself acceptable by humility and beneficence, he was universally accepted, and gained the good word of all his brethren. Thanks be to God, such a government as this we are blessed with, which seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed. God continue it long, very long, and grant us, under the happy protection and influence of it, to live quiet and peaceable lives, in godliness, honesty, and charity!—*Matthew Henry.*

Whereunto the king advanced him. Whereunto the king greatened him; wherein he showed himself a wise and politic prince; as did likewise Pharaoh in advancing Joseph; Darius, Daniel; Constantius Chlorus, Christian officers; our Henry VIII., the Lord Cromwell, whom he made his vicar-general. Jovianus, the emperor, was wont to wish that he might govern wise men, and that wise men might govern him. Justin Martyr praiseth this sentence of divine Plato: Commonwealths will then be happy when either philosophers reign or kings study philosophy. Jethro's justiciary must be a wise man, fearing God, &c. And that famous maxim of Constantius Chlorus, recorded by Eusebius, is very memorable: He cannot be faithful that is unfaithful to God, religion being the foundation of all true fidelity and loyalty to king and country. —*Trapp.*

"Mordecai, in order to vindicate the glory of God and his countrymen from the Hamanites, endured the hatred of many. He afflicted himself with fastings, prayers, sackcloth, cryings, and lamentations; he constantly spurned that impious man; and was at last adjudged to suffer on the ignominious cross. Now, however, by the singular favour of God, he is crowned beyond all men (Ahasuerus alone excepted) with glory and honour even in this world."—*Feuardent.*

The concluding chapter of the Book of Esther refers to the greatness of Ahasuerus and his prime minister Mordecai. The king laid a tax upon every part of his dominions over which his power extended, both on the continent and on the islands under his dominion, which were all in the Ægean Sea. He did great things; but as it was not the design of the author of this history to record "the acts of his power and of his might," reference is made by him to "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia." Where is this written record now? It has long since perished from the earth. Vast as was the empire of Persia itself, and apparently invincible, it fell, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel, before the power of Greece. Is it not strange that these chronicles should have perished, and that this mighty empire should have been overthrown, and yet that the records of the kingdom of God among men should have been preserved; and that kingdom itself should not only have stood amidst the revolutions of empires, but should now be spreading over the whole earth? Have we not another proof in this that God specially

guarded his own word from passing away from the earth? How otherwise should the Book of Esther not have shared the fate of the chronicles of Media and Persia? Have we not evidence also that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom? How otherwise should it have withstood the assaults of its enemies, and not have suffered the fate of other empires? Books have perished by hundreds and thousands, but the oldest book is indestructible. The Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires have all had their day, and then been broken to pieces, but the most ancient kingdom of God among men is mightier than ever. As over that book we can read the words of its Divine Author, written, as though clasping it all, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away;" so, in the contemplation of his Church, we can sing in the language of an old prediction—

"Its walls, defended by his grace,
No power shall e'er o'erthrow;
Salvation is its bulwark sure
Against th' assailing foe."

There is next a high eulogy passed upon Mordecai the Jew, especially in relation to his own kindred and people. He was "great amongst them." Not the greatness merely of rank, station, and wealth, but highly esteemed also for those elements of character which constitute true nobility. He was "accepted of the multitude of his brethren." He did not despise them. He did not disown his own relationship to them. He set them an excellent example of integrity and virtue. And because of his goodness and humility, as well as his greatness and power, they honoured and loved him. He sought "the wealth of his people;" did not, like his predecessor in office, enrich himself at the public expense, but in all his acts consulted their welfare. He did not look upon his own things only, but also on the things of others. He identified himself and his own interests with them and theirs, and generously helped forward, and rejoiced in, their prosperity and happiness. He "spake peace to all his seed." He was accessible to all; kind and courteous; not favouring one party above another, but endeavouring to unite all parties in the bonds of a common faith and hope; regarding with equal solicitude and concern the rich and the poor, and extending his sympathies to all sections of the community. We have surveyed him in different situations and circumstances—seated at the king's gate, and conscientiously resisting the king's commandment to pay religious homage to a man; rushing through the streets of Shushan with sackcloth and ashes, as though half frantic with vexation and fear, after Haman's iniquitous decree had been published; bravely counselling his cousin, and at her request spending three days in fasting and prayer; conducted through Shushan on the king's horse, led by his enemy, arrayed in the king's robe, and having the crown-royal upon his head; and afterwards formally installed in the office of Haman, and possessed of the king's signet-ring; but throughout all these changes in his outward circumstances he seems to have maintained the same character. It was not so much to find him humble, kind, and dutiful, when his position was less honourable and his life imperilled. The danger lay in his exaltation. There are not many who could preserve themselves from becoming vain, worldly, and inflated, when suddenly elevated from a comparatively humble position, to a place in a great empire, next to the king himself. But in his elevation those admirable qualities, which had formerly had but a limited sphere for their exercise, were made to shine forth conspicuously. Not only were they matured and strengthened, but took in the wide range of all his people, making him honoured and loved whilst he lived, for his humility, goodness, fear of God, and wise counsel; and, through Divine grace, fashioning for himself a name worthy of veneration by all subsequent generations. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."—*McEwen.*

Sir John Malcolm tells us that the sepulchre of Esther and Mordecai stands near the centre of the city of Hamadan.

It is a square building, terminated by a dome, with an inscription in Hebrew upon it, translated and sent to him by Sir Gore Ouseley, late ambassador to the court of Persia. It is as follows:—Thursday, fifteenth of the month Adar, in the year 4474 from the creation of the world, was finished the building of this temple over the graves of Esther and Mordecai, by the hands of the good-hearted brothers Eleas and Samuel, the sons of the deceased Ishmael of Kashon. The key of the tomb is always in the possession of the head of the Jews resident at Hamadan, and, doubtless, has been so preserved from the interment of the holy pair, when the grateful sons of the captivity, whose lives they had rescued from a universal massacre, first erected a monument over the remains of their benefactors, and obeyed the ordinance of gratitude, in making the anniversary of their preservation a lasting memorial of Heaven's mercy, and the just faith of Esther and Mordecai.—*Bible Cyclopædia.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTERS IX., X.

The Alpine Travellers. Three tourists were ascending the Alps. After they had gone a considerable distance, and were getting nearer to the eternal snows, and thus the danger increased, it was considered necessary to attach the company by ropes to one another and to the guides. But one of the tourists, an old traveller, was self-confident and self-reliant. He carried the doctrine of self-help too far, and refused to help his neighbours. He fell down the precipice and lost his life. We often best help ourselves by helping others.

Mutual help, need of. As an apple in the hand of a child makes other children run after and consort with him and share his sports, so does he convert affliction, and the need we have of each other's aid, into a girdle of love, with which to bind us all together; just as no one country produces all commodities, in order that the different nations, by mutual traffic and commerce, may cultivate concord and friendship. How foolish they are who imagine that all the world stands in need of them, but they of nobody; that they know and understand all things, but others nothing; and that the wit of all mankind should be apprenticed to their wisdom.—*Gotthold.*

Whitfield. An old woman relates, that when she was a little girl Whitfield stayed at her father's house. He was too much absorbed in his work to take much notice of, and pay much attention to, the little girl. She did not remember any of his eloquent utterances. She was, however, observant, and noticed the great preacher when he did not think that any one was observing his conduct. And the impression made upon her mind by his holy and cheerful demeanour, by his patience under trials and difficulties, and his evident consecration to his work, was of a most lasting and salutary character. Well were it if all great preachers would preach at home! We must be great in the palace of home, and then let our influence work outwards in all directions. Home religion is powerful.

The young Switzer. There was a young man among the Switzers that went about to usurp the government and alter their free state. Him they condemned to death, and appointed his father for executioner, as the cause of his evil education. But because Haman was hanged before, his sons (though dead) should now hang with him. If all fathers who had given an evil education to their sons were punished there would be a large increase of the criminal classes. At the present time the State is doing much in the way of educating; but the State cannot do that which is the proper duty of the parent. By precept, and even by the fear of penalty, should we enforce upon parents the duty of seeing faithfully to the true up-bringing of their children.

Faith of parents. An aged minister of Christ had several sons, all of whom became preachers of the Gospel but one. This one lived a life of dissipation for many years. But the good father's faith failed not. He trusted God that his wicked son, trained up in the way he should go, in old age should not depart from it. In this sublime faith the aged father passed away. Five years after, this son of many prayers sat at the feet of Jesus.

Influence of parents. The last thing forgotten in all the recklessness of dissolute profligacy is the prayer or hymn taught by a mother's lips, or uttered at a father's knee; and where there seems to have been any pains bestowed, even by one parent, to train up a child aright, there is in general more than ordinary ground for hope. —*The experience of a Prison Chaplain.*

Says the venerable Dr Spring: "The first afflicting thought to me on the death of my parents was, *that I had lost their prayers.*"

Great men Just as the traveller whom we see on yonder mountain height began his ascent from the plain, so the greatest man of whom the world can boast is but one of ourselves standing

on higher ground, and in virtue of his wider intelligence, his nobler thoughts, his loftier character, his purer inspiration, or his more manly daring, claiming the empire as his right. —*Hare.*

True greatness. The truly great consider, first, how they may gain the approbation of God; and, secondly, that of their own consciences. Having done this they would willingly conciliate the good opinion of their fellow-men.—*Cotton.*

The greatest man is he who chooses the right with invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is the calmest in storms, and whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is the most unfaltering.—*Dr. Chening.*

Distinguishing great men. I think it is Warburton who draws a very just distinction between a man of true greatness and a mediocrist. "If," says he, "you want to recommend yourself to the former, take care that he quits your society with a good opinion of you; if your object is to please the latter, take care that he leaves you with a good opinion of himself."—*Cotton.*

Thus Mordecai was truly great, considering, first, how to gain the approbation of God; and, secondly, that of his own conscience. He rises above others by virtue of his wider intelligence, his nobler thoughts, his loftier character, and his more manly daring.

A good name. A name truly good is the aroma from character. It is a reputation of whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report. It is such a name as is not only remembered on earth, but written in heaven. Just as a box of spikenard is not only valuable to its possessor, but pre-eminently precious in its diffusion; so, when a name is really good, it is of unspeakable service to all who are capable of feeling its aspiration. Mordecai's fame went out throughout all the provinces.—*Dr. J. Hamilton.*

Eastern hospitality. Nehemiah charges the people thus: "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." Also in Esther: "Therefore the Jews made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another." An Oriental prince sometimes honours a friend or a favourite servant, who cannot conveniently attend at his table, by sending a mess to his own home. When the Grand Emir found that it incommoded D'Arvieux to eat with him, he politely desired him to take his own time for eating, and sent him what he liked from his kitchen at the time he chose. So that the above statements must not be restricted to the poor.—*Paxton's 'Illustrations.'*

The heaviest taxes. "The taxes are indeed heavy," said Dr. Franklin on one occasion, and if those laid on by the Government were the *only* ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly; and from these taxes the commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing any abatement.

Safeguard of nations. France tried to go on without a God in the time of her first revolution; but Napoleon, for reasons of State, restored the Catholic religion. M. Thiers gives this singular passage in his history: "Napoleon said, 'For my part, I never hear the sound of the church bell in the neighbouring village without emotion.'" He knew that the hearts of the people were stirred by the same deep yearnings after God which filled his own, and so he proposed to restore the worship of God to infidel France. Later, and with deeper meaning, Perrier, successor to Lafayette as prime minister to Louis Philippe, said on his death-bed, "France must have religion" (*C. D. Fors*). So we may say, the nations, if they are to live, must have religion.

Punishment of nations. It was a sound reply of an English captain at the loss of Calais, when a proud Frenchman scornfully demanded, "When will you fetch Calais again?" "When your sins shall weigh down ours."—*Brooks.*

Nations. In one sense the providence of God is shown more clearly in nations than in individuals. Retribution can follow individuals into another state, but not so with nations; they have all their rewards and punishments in time. —*D. Castine.*

England's privileges.—It's the observation of a great politician, that England is a great animal which can never die unless it kill itself; answerable whereunto was the speech of Lord Rich, to the justices in the reign of king Edward VI.: "Never foreign power," said he, "could yet hurt, or in any part prevail, in this realm but by disobedience and disorder among ourselves; that is the way wherewith the Lord will plague us if he mind to punish us." Polydor Virgil calls Regnum Angliæ, Regnum Dei, the kingdom of England, the kingdom of God, because God seems to take special care of it, as having walled it about with the ocean, and watered it with the upper and nether springs, like that land which Caleb gave his daughter. Hence it was called Albion, *quasi* Olbion, the happy country; "whose valleys," saith Speed, "are like Eden, whose hills are as Lebanon, whose springs are as Pisgah, whose rivers are as Jordan, whose wall is the ocean, and whose defence is the Lord Jehovah." Foreign writers have termed our country the Granary of the Western World, the Fortunate Island, the Paradise of Pleasure, and Garden of God.—*Clarke's 'Examples.'*

THE END.

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HOMILETICAL

COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF JOB

BY

THOMAS ROBINSON, D.D.,

Author of "Suggestive and Homiletic Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," "The Evangelists and the Mishna," &c.

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TO THE

MINISTERS OF EVERY DENOMINATION

WHO PREACH

JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED,

AND TO

HIS TRIED AND FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF EVERY NAME;

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

THE following work was originally intended to form part of Dr. Van Doren's "Suggestive and Homiletic Commentary on the Old and New Testaments;" and consequently to be accompanied with critical notes similar to those in the Author's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, already published in connection with that series. That undertaking, however, having been given up by Dr. Van Doren, it was proposed to the writer by the Editors of the "Homiletical Commentary on the Books of the Old Testament" to reconstruct and adapt his work, so that it might be admitted as part of their series. The object of the Editors of the "Homiletical Commentary," however, was rather to aid in the use of existing commentaries than to produce a new one, intending their series to contain as little as possible of what might be found in other expositions. The writer is deeply conscious of the many imperfections adhering to his work; he has, however, made it his endeavour, as far as he was able, to carry out the object of the Editors; and, at the same time, to prepare an expository and homiletical work on what is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult books of the Bible, which may, by the Divine blessing, be useful both to ordinary readers of the Word and to those who have to minister to others.

In the preparation of his work the Author has availed himself of all the critical and practical aids within his reach, in order that it might exhibit the results of the studies of the most eminent Biblical scholars and expositors of the Word up to the present time. He is sorry that,

owing to the change of plan, he is not able to present to the student the views and opinions of others on the various *loci difficiles* of the book, as he had done in his Commentary on the Romans. If he has thus appeared in any place to adopt sentiments which have been expressed by living writers before him, without mentioning their names, he takes this opportunity of expressing his obligations and of soliciting their kindly condonance. In connection with the first two chapters, he was especially pleased with remarks found in some papers of the "Homilist" on the Book of Job, probably from the pen of the accomplished editor, Dr. Thomas.

Those who are best acquainted with the nature of the Book of Job, as one of the most ancient books in the world, if not itself the most ancient, and with the difficulties connected with the original language of the composition, will be most disposed to make allowance for the imperfections discoverable in the present work. If he shall have succeeded in any degree in aiding the readers of the Word in the spiritual understanding of this frequently obscure, but most precious, portion of it, or in assisting any in expounding it to others, the writer will have had his desire accomplished, and will ascribe all the praise to Him "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

JOB.

Introduction.

I. The General Character of the Book. One of the grandest portions of inspired Scripture. A heaven-replenished storehouse of comfort and instruction. The Patriarchal Bible, and a precious monument of primitive theology. Is to the Old Testament what the Epistle to the Romans is to the New. Job's history well known to early Christians as an example of patience (Jam. v. 11). Understood by them typically and allegorically of Christ. From the second century the book read in the churches in Passion Week. Stands unique and independent among the books of the Bible. In its prose parts so simple and easy that a child may understand it; in its poetic portion, the deepest and obscurest book in the Old Testament. Contains milk for babes and strong meat for those of full age. Studded with passages of grandeur and beauty, tenderness and pathos, sublimity and terror. Acknowledged to surpass in sublimity and majesty every other book in the world. In recent times studied as a master-piece of poetry. A fountain from which some of the greatest poets have drawn their inspirations. To suffering believers the sound of Faithful's voice to Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

II. Authorship. Uncertain. Long believed by most to be Moses. Moses well acquainted with Egypt; "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds" (Acts vii. 22); capable of writing sublime poetry (as Ex. xv.; Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii.); himself trained in the school of affliction (Heb. xi. 25); had opportunities in Midian for obtaining the knowledge of the history and composing the poem. Parts of the book probably in previous existence as traditional poetry, maxims, or sayings of earlier sages (*e.g.*) xii. 13—25; xv. 20—35). The human authorship uncertain,—no doubt about the Divine. The author of the greatest and sublimest poem in the world unknown.—*Little matter that our names are forgotten, if our works live.*

III. Period of Composition. Opinions divided. Two periods principally assigned. 1. That of Moses (see above); 2. That of David and Solomon. Views of scholars and critics now more generally in favour of the latter; (1) From the style and character of the composition; (2) The advanced state of art and civilization indicated; (3) The occurrence of certain expressions; (4) The prevalence of the idea of "Wisdom;" (5) The similarity of sentiment and language to those in Psalms and Proverbs, particularly as regards the state of the dead; *e.g.* in Psalm lxxxviii. and lxxxix. (the works of Heman and Ethan (1 Kings iv. 31).

IV. Character of the Book. A true history poetically treated. Proofs: (1) Job mentioned as a historical person with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. xiv. 14; James v. 11;)—(2) The localities real, and names of persons not significant, except that of Job himself;—(3) Extended fiction not according to the spirit of high antiquity, and especially to that of the Bible. Probably the facts given substantially, though not exactly, as they occurred. The speeches not necessarily given *verbatim*.

V. Species of Composition. A drama, but only in a loose sense. A didactic narrative, for the most part in a poetic and dramatic form. The discussion of a grave and solemn question the body of the book. The controversy carried on in poetry, the introduction and conclusion in prose. Poetry the earliest form of composition, as best retained in memory. Sentiments and maxims preserved in the East in a terse, proverbial, and poetic form. The book exhibits the chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry, viz. *parallelism*, or the slightly varied repetition of the same sentiment in parallel clauses. Earliest examples of it in Gen. iv. 23; Jude 14. Parallelism a key to the interpretation. The poetry of Job also *strophaic*,—arranged, though irregularly, in strophes or stanzas, each containing more or less verses or connected parallel clauses.

VI. Genuineness and Integrity of the Book. The whole now generally admitted to be from one and the same author. The three parts,—introduction, controversy, and conclusion—intimately connected with and necessary to each other. The speeches of Elihu necessary as a complement to the others, and as preparatory to the address of Jehovah. Possibly, as in some other books of Scripture, a second inspired hand may have completed the book as we now have it. A dislocation of some passages also possible; the instances noted in the commentary.

VII. Canonicity and Inspiration. Universally admitted. Its inspiration not prejudiced by our ignorance of the human author. The book apparently known by Ezekiel six hundred years before Christ (Ezek. xiv. 14). Translated into Greek, as part of the Hebrew Scriptures, two hundred and seventy years before Christ. Included in the Scriptures used and referred to by Jesus and the apostles as the inspired word of God. Quoted twice by the apostle (Heb. xii. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 19); in the latter case with the usual form of Scripture quotation, "It is written." Its morality and theology in harmony with the other books of Scripture. Completes the canon by presenting a view of the Patriarchal Dispensation. In the development of the history of Redemption, stands midway between the Fall and the Crucifixion.

VIII. Subject of the Book. The trial of Job; its occasion, nature, endurance, and issue. The trial of man as recovered by Divine grace from Adam's fall. Proof given against Satan that there is such a thing as disinterested piety in the world. To afford this proof, Job visited with varied, intense, and accumulated suffering. Keen discussion arising out of this between Job and his three friends, as to why he is thus treated. The cause, according to the friends, some secret sins on the part of Job; according to Job himself, God's mere arbitrary will. Another reason hinted at by one of the three and maintained by a fifth speaker,—the benevolent design of suffering though induced by sin (ch. v. 17; xxxiii. 19—30). The book, the story of an elect one in early patriarchal days, taught by suffering to learn practically the life of faith. The nest in which he thought to die, rifled of everything. Job righteous, but not yet prepared for such a change. To be made, by trial, a member of the pilgrim family. Job, like Abraham, to be one of God's strangers in the world (Heb. xi. 13). Chastened to be made a partaker of God's holiness (Heb. xii. 10). Made to have resurrection in his experience as well as in his creed.

IX. Design of the Book. Probably manifold. (1) To show the reality of true religion, the nature and the power of faith. (2) To exhibit the blessedness of the godly however assailed by affliction. (3) To show that true piety is wisdom, the only way to man's real and highest welfare. (4) To display the Providence of God in its inscrutableness, justice, and mercy. (5) To show that in the case of the righteous, "behind a frowning Providence" God "hides a smiling face." (6) To exhibit the consistency between the truths of Revelation and the dealings of Providence. (7) To afford an example of patience and trust in God under sorest trials, and so to minister

comfort and hope to tried believers. (8) To exhibit a child of God set to learn through trials the power of his heavenly calling. (9) To illustrate the fact of human depravity even in the best. (10) To teach the final conquest over Satan and the triumphs of righteousness and peace in the earth. (11) To exhibit a picture of man's fall and his redemption through faith in the Redeemer. (12) To present in Job a type of Christ, the righteous sufferer for man's sake. The same type exhibited in many of the Psalms, as the twenty-second and sixty-ninth. The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, the central truth of Old Testament Scriptures (1 Pet. i. 11). The testimony of Jesus the spirit of prophesy (Rev. xix. 10; Luke xxiv. 27). This book, like the rest of the Old Testament, written that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope (Rom. xv. 4). Profitable, like all inspired Scripture, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. iii. 16).

X. **Divisions.** Three general divisions with many subordinate ones; viz., the introduction or prologue (ch. i. ii.); the controversy, including Job's lamentation as the occasion of it (iii-xlii., 6); the conclusion or epilogue (xlii. 7, &c.). Two parts in the controversy:—the Controversy proper between Job and his three friends; and the Solution of it, in the speeches of Elihu and the address of Jehovah.

XI. **Analysis of Contents.**—I. First Division: historical introduction (in prose) (ch. i. ii.) (1) Job's character, prosperity, and walk (i. 1—5). (2) Jehovah's purpose to prove Job by suffering (i.) through loss of property (i. 16—17; (ii.) loss of children (18, 19); (iii.) loss of health (ii. 1—8). (3) Job's perseverance in his piety (i. 20—22; ii. 9, 10.) (4) The visit of his friends as the preparation for the conflict (ii. 11—13).

II. Second Division: The Controversy and its Solution (in poetry). (1) Job's desponding lament, the immediate occasion of the controversy (ch. iii). (2) The controversy proper, in three cycles or courses of dialogues.

First Course: Commencement of the controversy (iv.—xiv.).

First Dialogue—Eliphaz and Job (iv.—vii.). (1) Eliphaz accuses Job and exhorts him to repentance (iv., v). (2) Job justifies his lament and complains of his friends (vi., vii).

Second Dialogue—Bildad and Job (viii.—x.). (1) Bildad reproves Job and reminds him of the end of wickedness (viii.). (2) Job maintains his innocence and complains of God's mysterious severity (ix., x.).

Third Dialogue—Zophar and Job (xi.—xiv). (1) Zophar severely charges Job and urges him to repentance (xi). (2) Job attacks his friends as wanting in wisdom and justice, and addresses himself to God, still maintaining his innocence, and complaining of the general lot of humanity (xii.—xiv.).

Second Course: Growth of the controversy (xv.—xxi.).

First Dialogue—Eliphaz and Job (xv.—xvii). (1) Eliphaz reproves Job's obstinacy in maintaining his innocence, and asserts God's righteous retribution on evil doers (xv.) (2) Job bemoans his forlorn condition, but expresses the confident hope of a future acknowledgment of his innocence (xvi., xvii.).

Second Dialogue—Bildad and Job (xviii., xix.). (1) Bildad rebukes Job as an empty boisterous talker, and reminds him of the fate of the ungodly (xviii.) (2) Job retorts on his friends, bewails his sufferings, but expresses confidence in God as his Redeemer and Avenger, and warns his friends of the consequence of their uncharitableness (xix.).

Third Dialogue—Zophar and Job (xx., xxi.). (1) Zophar maintains the short-lived prosperity and bitter end of the ungodly (xxi.). (2) Job in reply asserts their frequent prosperity and the afflictions of the godly (xxi.).

Third Course: Height of the controversy (xxii.—xxvii.).

First Dialogue—Eliphaz and Job (xxii.—xxiv.). (1) Eliphaz openly accuses Job of great sins and warns him to repent (xxii.). (2) Job expresses his wish that God would

appear and decide the case Himself, but bemoans His withdrawal from him, recounting at the same time similiar cases of apparent inequality in the Divine procedure (xxiii., xxiv.).

Second Dialogue—Bildad and Job (xxv., xxvi.). (1) Bildad briefly declares God's greatness and purity, and man's vileness (xxv.). (2) Job ridicules Bildad's common-places, and enlarges much more fully on God's sovereignty and power (xxvi.).

Job alone in the field (xxvii., xxviii.). (1) Solemnly re-asserts his innocence, and declares his joy in God, with the certain miserable end of the ungodly (xxvii.). (2) Intimates that the wisdom which can solve the problem is only found with and through means of true piety (xxviii.).

The Solution of the controversy.

First Step in the Solution: *Guilt cannot be the cause of those peculiar sufferings.* Job's soliloquy (xxix.—xxxi.). (1) Longing retrospect of former prosperity (xxix.). (2) Mournful description of his present condition (xxx.). (3) Solemn protestation of his freedom from open and secret sins (xxxi.).

Second Step: *Afflictions of the righteous chastening and purifying.* Elihu's speeches (xxxii—xxxvii.). (1) His introduction by the poet, in prose (xxxii. 1—6). (2) His motive and reasons for joining in the controversy (6—22).

His first speech (xxxiii.). (1) Invites Job's attention to himself as a mild judge of his case (1—7). (2) Blames his confidence in his innocence (8—11). (3) Declares God's gracious dealings with men to bring them to repentance (12—30).

His second speech (xxxiv.). (1) Blames Job for doubting God's righteousness (1—9). (2) Maintains that righteousness, as necessary to the government of the world (10—30). (3) Reproves Job's sin and folly in charging God with injustice, and in calling on Him to decide the controversy (31—37).

His third speech (xxxv.). Blames Job for thinking piety useless to its possessor (1—8). Gives reason for the continuance of sufferings (9—16).

His fourth speech (xxxvi.—xxxvii.). (1) Defends the righteousness of God on the ground of His benevolent object in afflicting (1—21), and of His wise and mighty operations in nature (22—37; xxxvii. 1—13). (2) Shows the lessons from these operations (14—24).

Third Step in the Solution: *None may dispute against God.* Jehovah's speeches, with Job's confession (xxxviii., xlii. 1—6).

Jehovah's appearance and challenge to Job (xxxviii. 1—3).

His first speech (xxxviii.—xxxix.). (1) Challenges Job to answer various questions relative to creation (4—15); to the visible universe and powers of nature (16—27); to the wind and starry heavens (28—38); to the preservation and propagation of wild animals (xxxix. 1—30). (2) Conclusion of speech, with Job's humble reply (xl. 1—5).

Jehovah's second speech (xl. 6, &c., xli.). (1) Reproves Job for doubting God's righteousness (xl. 7—14). (2) Points to humbling proofs of his weakness in relation to certain animals, as the Behemoth and Leviathan (xl. 15, &c., xli.).

Job's humble confession of the divine power and his own guilt and folly (xlii. 1—6).

III. THIRD DIVISION. Historical conclusion, in prose (xlii. 7—15). (1) Jehovah's justification of Job before his friends (7—10). (2) Job's restoration to former honour and dignity (11, 12). (3) The doubling of his estate and children (13—17).

CHAPTER I. 1—3.

FIRST PART OF PROSE INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OR POEM.

1. Job's personality (verse 1). "There was a man," &c.

1. *His actual existence.* Job a historic, not a fictitious character. Mentioned with Noah and Daniel (Ez. xiv. 14). Lived in the time of the patriarchs. Died about 200 years old; Abraham, 175; his father Terah, 205. No apparent allusion in the Book to the Exodus or the Giving of the Law. Worship, manners, and customs, those of patriarchal times. *His existence a proof God never left Himself without a witness.*

2. *His residence.* "In the land of Uz." Uz, east or south-east of Palestine. Adjacent to the Edomites, who appear at one time to have occupied it (Lam. iv. 21). Probably in Arabia Deserta, between Palestine and the Euphrates. Uz the name of a son of Aram the son of Shem (Gen. x. 23); of the firstborn of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. xxii. 21); and of the grandson of Seir the Horite (Gen. xxxvi. 28). The country named from one of these. Job's country, like Abraham's, at that time tending to idolatry (ch. xxxi. 26—28). *Grace found flourishing in the most unfavourable situations.* Job, like Abraham and Daniel, found "faithful among the faithless." *To be godly among the ungodly a high excellence and honour.* So Obadiah in Ahab's court and the saints in Cesar's palace (1 Kings xviii. 12; Phil. iv. 22).

3. *His name.* "Whose name was Job." Denotes "the persecuted," or "the penitent." Names in the east often significant,—descriptive of character or history. Sometimes given from events connected with the birth, as Jabez, Ichabod, &c. Sometimes changed for another in after-life, as Jacob for Israel, Jedidiah for Solomon. Benoni, "son of my affliction," changed by Jacob to Benjamin,—"son of my right hand" (Gen. xxxv. 18). Job thought by some to be the same with Jobab (Gen. x. 29). "Job" also the name of one of the sons of Issachar (Gen. xlvi. 13). Job's name a memento of the possible or actual reverse to his prosperity (ch. iii. 25, 26). His afflictions to be remembered as waters that have passed away (ch. xi. 16). *Profitable, as well as pleasant, to remember past troubles* (Ps. xlii. 6, 8).

II. His character. "That man was perfect," &c. *The question not so much what a man* DOES *as what he* IS. Grace mentioned before greatness. *A gracious character and spiritual blessings a man's choicest possessions.*

"Perfect." Implies: 1. *Completeness.* Job complete in all the parts of his moral character (Jam. i. 4). Like a human body with no member or organ wanting or imperfect. A man's morality and religion to be characterized by *symmetry and thoroughness. Attention not to be given to one class of duties to the neglect of another.*—Job conscientious in the discharge of all the duties of life (Ps. cxix. 6). Kept, like Paul, a conscience void of offence both towards God and man (Acts xxiv. 16). Believers to be sanctified wholly, throughout body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. v. 23.) *Are actually sanctified in every part, though every part not wholly sanctified.* A perfect man, in the New Testament sense, an advanced, mature, and fully instructed Christian (Phil. iii. 15; 1 Cor. ii 6; Eph. iv. 13; James iii. 2).

2. *Sincerity.* Job's perfection rather that of purpose than performance. Aimed constantly at perfection. Not sinless but sincere. Without guile (John i. 47) Without hypocrisy towards God or double-dealing towards man. *Sincerity the foundation of a gracious character.* Gives religion all its worth and beauty. Godly sincerity is Gospel perfection. Sincere and sound hearted believers in God's sight "perfect."

3. *Blamelessness.* The character of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke i. 6). No fault found in Daniel, even by his enemies (Dan. vi. 4). Moral integrity is Bible perfection. Paul lived in all good conscience (Acts xxiii. 1). Job blameless though not sinless. Reproved by Jehovah (ch. xlii. 5, 6). Noah said to be perfect (Gen. vi. 9).—God's testimony to Job's blamelessness (ch. ii. 3). His own (ch. xxxi *throughout*).

Christian Perfection.

A certain perfection belonging to saints both in Old and New Testaments. The holiness of believers on earth, *partial and progressive.* Christ the only absolutely righteous and perfect One. Believers perfect and complete in Him, now *representatively*, hereafter *personally* (Col. ii, 10). Have here a *begun* perfection in conformity to Christ's image (Hom.

viii. 9, 29). Test conformity to be in time *absolute and complete* (2 Cor. iii. 18). Christ made to those who are in Him both "wisdom" and "sanctification" (1 Cor. i. 30). Believers only made perfect in love (1 John iv. 18). Job's case (ch. xxix 11, 16; xxxi. 16, 20). Love the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10). Perfection required by God in all his children (Matt. v. 48; Gen. xvii. 1; Jam. i. 4). To be constantly pressed after by them (Phil. iii. 12, 14). Desire and endeavour after it a test of sincerity. Not usually to be attained without afflictions (Heb. v. 8; xii. 10, 11). The Captain of our salvation himself made perfect through suffering (Heb. ii. 10). Job perfect and upright *before* his trials, humble and contrite *after* them (ch. xl. 4; xlii. 6.

"Upright." Refers to heart and life. Or, "perfect" internally, "upright" externally.—Job outwardly what he was inwardly, and *vice versâ*. *Uprightness of life and conduct the best proof of inward sincerity*. When the heart is sincere towards God, the actions will be just towards men. "Upright"=straight. Job held the straight path of rectitude. Sin's ways crooked. Joshua not to turn to the right hand or to the left (Joshua i. 7). Like Daniel, Job did what was right, regardless of consequences (Dan. vi. 10). "Perfect" and "upright" connected also in the Psalms (Psalm xxxvii. 37). The two complete the moral character of a man of God.

"One that feared God." Another element in his character, and accounting for the preceding. *Religion, or the fear of God, the true basis of morality*. The first table of the law the foundation of and preparation for the second. *A morality without religion is a body without a soul.*—Job profoundly religious. The horizon of his soul filled with God (ch. xxix. 3, 4; xxxi. 23). Looked at all things in their relation to God and His will (ch. xxxi. 2, 14, 15, 28). Reverenced His majesty, regarded His authority, dreaded His wrath. Feared *God*, not the idols of his countrymen (ch. xxxi. 26, 27). So Cornelius (Acts x. 2.) Feared Him, not with a slavish but a filial fear—a fear coupled with confidence and love. *The fear of the saints, rather the fear of offending than the dread of suffering*. Believers fear God for His *goodness* as well as His *greatness* (Hos. iii. 5). Saints fear God because He *pardons*, sinners because He *punishes* (Ps. cxxx. 4). *Filial fear the product of God's free grace revealed in the Gospel* (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40; Rom. viii. 15). The root of all true religion. Holiness perfected in it (2 Cor. vii. 1. Forgiveness through the blood of Jesus imparted with a view to it (Ps. cxxx. 4). That fear required by God (Jer. v. 22). Due to Him (Ps. lxxxix. 7). Casts out the fear of man (Heb. xi. 27; Dan. iii. 16—18).—*The fear of God the secret of true courage and endurance.*—Fabius Maximus, a Roman general, sought to impress his soldiers with reverence for the gods as the best means of confirming their valour [*Plutarch*].

"Eschewed evil." *Heb.*, "Departed from evil," from its practice and presence. Hurried away from it as from the presence of a monster. Avoided it as offensive to God, and in itself loathsome and abominable. *Sometimes more difficult to avoid evil than to practice good.* Evil often fashionable. Followed by the multitude (Exod. xxiii. 2; Matt. vii. 13). To depart from evil the effect and evidence of the fear of God (Ps. iv. 4; Prov. viii. 13; xvi. 6). Exhibits the spirituality and strength of holiness. The spirit active against evil in order to depart from it. Believers while on earth beset with temptations to evil. Job eschewed *all* evil. Every appearance of it to be abstained from (1 Thess. v. 22). Evil to be departed from in its *pleasing* as well as its *repulsive* forms. Not only evil itself to be eschewed, but its occasions, temptations, and incentives (Prov. iv. 14, 15; Matt. v. 29, 30). Job withdrew his *eyes* from evil as well as his hands and feet (ch. xxxi. 1). To depart from evil necessary in order to persevere in good. Grace received to be carefully guarded and preserved. Job's perfection not sinlessness, but a constant striving against sin.

III. His prosperity.

In three particulars (verse 2).

1. *His children.* "There were born to him." Children esteemed a great part of a man's prosperity and happiness, especially in O. T. times. Viewed as a mark of the Divine favour and blessing (Ps. cxxvii. 3—5; cxxviii. 3, 4). Mentioned first as the chief part of Job's outward prosperity. His happiness, however, not merely in having children, but having them *godly* (verse 5). "Born *to him.*" His children comforts and blessings to him. *Job eminent for holiness, yet not a hermit or recluse.*

"Seven sons and three daughters." In number and sex the ideal of a perfect family. Both numbers, as well as their sum, mystic and symbolical. "Seven," indicative of *perfection*; "ten," of *multitude*. The more children, if gracious, the greater blessing. More sons than daughters, an enhancement of his prosperity. *A large family no hindrance to piety, uprightness, and charity* (ch. xxix. 11—17; xxxi. 13—20, 32). So Enoch walked with God 300 years, and begat sons and daughters (Gen. v. 22).

2. *His property.* "His substance was seven thousand sheep," &c. Job described as an Arab prince, emir or sheikh. His

possession in *cattle*, though not a wandering Bedowin (ch. xxix. 7). No land or houses mentioned, though living in or near a city. Appears, like Isaac, to have cultivated land belonging to others (ch. xxxi. 39). Wealth, in earliest times, reckoned not by extent of land but number of cattle (Gen. xii. 16; xxiv. 35; xxx. 43). *Heavenly wisdom the only real "substance"* (Prov. viii. 21; xxiii. 5). *Piety and charity ordinarily the best way of thriving even in this world.* Prayer whets the tools, oils the wheels, and brings a blessing. Riches an evil only in their *abuse*. In the *hand* a *blessing*, in the *heart* a *curse*. Riches *not bad*, therefore given to the *good; not the best*, therefore given also to the *bad*. Taken from the good for *trial*, from the bad for *conviction or punishment*. Not money, but the *love* of it, the root of all evil (1 Tim. vi. 10). Job's grace seen in his having riches without setting his heart on them (ch. xxxi. 24, 25; Ps. lxii. 10). One of the few examples in which the camel gets through the needle's eye (Matt. xix. 24). In the N.T., the poor of this world often chosen as heirs of the kingdom (Jam. ii. 5). The Master himself without a place on which to lay his head (Matt. viii. 20). Enough for the servant that he be as his Lord (Matt. x. 25). Job pious, and his piety acting as a friend to his prosperity; prosperous, and his prosperity giving a lustre to his piety [*Henry.*]

"Household." Body of servants or slaves required for cattle and agriculture. Job's slaves or servants treated by him with justice and humanity (ch. xxxi. 13). Regarded by him as in God's sight on the same footing with himself (ch. xxxi. 14). Could all bear honourable testimony to his conduct and character (ch. xxxi. 31). Like Abraham, doubtless, had them trained for *God's* service as well as *his own* (Gen. xiv. 14).

3. *His dignity.* "So that" (or, "and") "he was the greatest," &c. A new feature in his prosperity. Probably indicates his eminence and rank as a prince or magistrate. Job not only the *richest* but the most *respected* in the land (Gen. xxiv. 35; xxvi. 13; Ecc. ii. 9). A man of great authority, not only from his *possessions* but his *character*. His greatness not only that of *wealth*, but of intellectual and moral *worth* (ch. xxix. 11 16; xxxi. 16—20). Mentioned to show the greatness of his fall and his grace in bearing it. Job, like David and Daniel, an example of grace coupled with earthly nobility. *Grace graces the highest position. Goodness, the fairest jewel in an earthly coronet.* Grace found in every station. Not many noble are called, yet always some (1 Cor. i. 26). Poor Lazarus reposes in rich Abraham's bosom. Goodness appears the more excellent when associated with worldly greatness. Has then most to overcome and can most diffuse its influence.

"Men of the East." "The East" applied to countries east of Palestine, as the north of Arabia. *Heb.*, "Sons of the East." Noted for their riches, yet Job the richest of them all. Easy with God to make his children the *greatest*, yet in love often places them among the *least* in this world (1 Cor. i. 27, 28).

CHAPTER I. 4, 5.

SECOND PART OF PROSE INTRODUCTION.

I. Job's happiness in his children (verse 4).

"And his sons went," &c. Their feasting the medium of social intercourse and of maintaining friendly relations with each other. Shows (1) the social habits of his children; (2) the love and harmony prevailing among them. An exemplification of Ps. cxxxiii. 1. Contrasted with the family of Adam (Gen. iv. 8); of Abraham (Gen. xxi. 9; of Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 41); of Jacob (Gen. xxxvii. 4); of David (2 Sam. xiii. 28).

Festivity.

"Feasting" lawful,—when (1) moderate; (2) seasonable; (3) in the fear of God; (4) with thankful acknowledgment of his goodness; (5) without offence to others; (6) with charitable remembrance of the poor and needy (Luke xiv. 12—14. Ecc. iii. 4). The general rule of Christian feasting (1 Cor. x. 31). Its limitation (Rom. xiv. 20, 21; 1 Cor. viii. 13; x. 32, 33). Unseasonable times for feasting (Amos vi. 4—6; Joel ii. 16; Is. xxii. 12, 13). Christ's presence and miracle at Cana a sanction to special seasons of temperate festivity (John ii. 1—11). The creature given not only for necessity but delight (Ps. civ. 14, 15).

Job's sons feasted (1) in their own houses; indicating their wealth, order, and harmony; —also, the maturity of their age. Enhances the calamity of their death. (2) "Each on his own day," *i. e.* his birthday, or the day on which it was his turn to entertain the rest. Birthdays in the East days of great rejoicing (Gen. xl. 20; Matt. xiv. 6). (3.) They sent and called for their "three sis-

ters," supposed, like women in the East, to be living with their mother, in their own tent or apartment (Gen. xxiv. 67; xxxi. 33, 34; Esther ii. 9—14). Beautiful picture of fraternal harmony and affection. *Proof of how Job had trained up his family.*

II. Job's spiritual care over his children (verse 5).

"And it was so, when," &c. At the conclusion of each feast Job offers special sacrifices for his children. Uncertain whether his sons were present, though probable. "He sent and sanctified them;" (1) Doing what is immediately after related; or, (2) Exhorting them to prepare themselves for the approaching solemnity. In O. T language, people often said to *do* that which they *enjoin to be done.* The members of the family usually present at the family sacrifice (1 Sam. xx. 6, 29).—Hence learn:—

1. *Christians to see that their families observe God's worship as well as themselves.* Family worship an institution of God. An acknowledgment of God as the God of the family and the author of family blessings. A prayerless family an unblessed one. A family without worship, a garden without a fence. The presence of the children at daily family worship calculated to produce (1) Reverential fear and filial confidence towards God; (2) Dutiful regard, submission, and obedience towards their parents; (3) Harmony, affection, and sympathy towards each other.

2. *Preparation necessary for solemn services and approaches to God* (Ex. xix. 10, 14; Ps. xxvi. 2). As men measure to God in *preparation*, God measures to men in *blessing* [*Trapp*]. God not to be worshipped carelessly and slovenly, but in the best manner possible (Ecc. v. 1). Jews had their preparation and fore-preparation for the Passover. Before Christ, such preparation both moral and ceremonial (Gen. xxxv. 2). After Christ, only moral (Ps. xxvi. 2).

Job took measures to keep his children in a pure and pardoned state. *Parents cannot make their children spiritual worshippers, but can bring them to spiritual ordinances.* Cannot give converting grace, but can employ the means through which God may impart it.

Job recognized and sought to discharge his responsibilities as a father. Realized his children's relation to God and eternity. Hence more concerned that they should have *grace in their heart* than *gold in their house;* should stand in the favour of God than enjoy the smiles of the *world;* should be *sanctified* for the *next* world than be *accomplished* for *this.* Job's solicitude contrasted with Eli's indifference (1 Sam. ii. 29). *A parent's responsibility for his children does not cease with their childhood.* Though no longer sheltered by the parent's *roof*, they can and ought to be sheltered by the parent's *prayers.*

"Rose up early." His zeal and earnestness. Impatient till God was reconciled to his children. An early hour required by the *largeness* of the work as well as the *solemnity* of it. Sacrifices usually offered early in the morning (Ex. xxxii. 6). *Not safe to let sin be unrepented of and unforgiven.* The Psalmist's resolution (Ps. lxiii. 1). Abraham's practice (Gen. xxii. 3). That of Moses (Ex. xxiv. 4; of Jesus Christ (Mark i. 35). Has special promise attached to it (Prov. viii. 17). What our hands find to do, to be done with our might (Ecc. ix. 10). *Well to begin the day with prayer and application of the Atonement.* God, the author of *every day*, ought to have the *first hour* of it. The mind then freshest and freest from earthly cares and distractions. Early worship taught by the light of nature. Practised by the heathen (1 Sam. v. 3, 4).

III. Job's faith in the Atonement.

"Offered burnt offerings," as the head of the family. Patriarchal custom. So Abraham (Gen. xii. 7, 8); Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 25); Jacob (Gen. xxxiii. 20; xxxv. 7). The Law with a priestly family not yet instituted.

Sacrifices.

The "burnt-offering" a victim slain and burnt entire on the altar (Lev. i. 9.) Under the law, might be either a bullock, a lamb, a goat, or turtle doves (Lev. i. 2, 10, 14). Burnt-offerings the only sacrifices mentioned in Patriarchal times. Sacrifices offered from the earliest period. Found in Adam's family (Gen. iv. 4). Probably prescribed by God himself on the day man fell. The first sacrifices probably the beasts with whose skins God provided coats for our first parents (Gen. iii. 21). The first express direction from God regarding sacrifice given to Abraham (Gen. xv. 9.) Intended to keep in view the promised Seed, to be bruised in man's stead (Gen. iii. 15). Offered with every special approach to God. No worship without sacrifice. Without shedding of blood no remission, and without remission no acceptable approach to God. Sacrifices told (1) Of guilt; (2) Of punishment; (3) Of substitution. Sometimes *Eucharistic*, or connected with *thanksgiving.* So Noah's (Gen. viii. 20). Sometimes *Federative*, or connected with a *covenant* (Ex. xxiv. 4 8). In Job's case, simply *Expiatory*, or with a view to *forgiveness of sin.* Hence his faith (Heb. xi. 4). Sacrifice, as a substitute for the offender, a *natural instinct.* Hence, as well as from *tradition*, universal

in the heathen world. *There*, sometimes human ones offered, as of more supposed value than dumb animals. Impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Heb. x. 4). The insufficiency of all such sacrifices deeply felt in the conscience (Mic. vi. 6, 7). *Every bloody sacrifice a finger pointing to the only sufficient one on Calvary* (John i. 29). Hence the cry on the cross, "It is finished," and the rent veil (John xix. 30; Matt. xxvii. 51.)

> "Die man, or justice must, unless for him
> Some other *able* and as *willing*, pay
> The rigid satisfaction, death for death."
>
> *Milton.*

"According to the number of them all." A victim for each of the seven sons. Job no niggard in God's service. *Children to be prayed for individually and specifically.* Each has his particular temper and circumstances, trials and temptations, sins and wants. *Christ's one offering sufficient for all and for all time* (Heb. x. 12—14). *Particular application of the atonement to be made by and for each.* Each sinner needs a *substitute for himself* or a *personal interest* in the great universal one. "He gave Himself a ransom for *all*," to be followed by—"He gave Himself for *me*" (1 Tim. ii. 6; Gal. ii. 20).

"For Job said," within himself or to others. Special reason why Job now sacrificed. Religious duties to be *grounded on intelligent reasons.* God requires a reasonable service (Rom. xii. 1. Not *ignorance*, but *intelligence*, the mother of true devotion. "Call him wise whose actions, words, and steps are all a clear *because* to a clear *why*" [*Lavater*].

"It may be my sons have sinned,"—during their festivities. A bloody sacrifice rendered necessary by *sin*, which can only be washed out by blood (Heb. ix. 22). Sin such an outrage on God's universe that only blood can atone for it [*Talmage*]. "It *may* be." *Suspicion* of sin, much more the *consciousness* of it, ought to send us at once to Christ's blood. A blessing to have a tender conscience. To be without *allowed sin*, the holiness of *earth*; to be without *sin at all*, the holiness of *heaven*. *Sin easily committed in the tumult and rush of pleasure.* The time of *security* the time for greatest *apprehension.* Job's sons usually devout. Their sinning now only a *contingency*; but a very possible one. Their danger that of—(1) Vain thoughts; (2) Excited feelings; (3) Unguarded words. Cause for Job's concern—(1) In the depravity of the heart; (2) In the frailty and folly of youth; (3) in the temptations incident to a feast. Wine a mocker; sin easily committed under its influence (Prov. xx. 1; xxiii. 29—35). A double guard needed in the social use of it.—"Cursed God in their hearts;"—reproached or renounced Him for the moment. Same word usually rendered "bless." Sometimes also the opposite, as 1 Kings xxi. 10. Blessing in the East customary on parting as well as meeting (Gen. xlvii. 7—10; 1 Kings viii 66). Hence, or from a peculiar Hebrew usage, the probable double meaning of the word here as well as in chap. ii. 9. *Allowed sin a temporary renouncement of God. Sin itself an element of separation between God and the soul. Great danger of such renouncement in festivity and worldly pleasure.* "In their hearts;"—(1) thinking lightly of God's favour in comparison with present enjoyment: the contrast of Psalm iv. 6, 7; (2) forgetting and not acknowledging God as the author of all their mercies. *Heart or secret sins not to be lightly thought of* (Ps. xix. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 4). Such sins are (1) Dangerous; (2) Deserving condemnation; (3) Need atoning blood. The morality of Job's children. Job apprehensive only of *heart sins.*

IV. The habit and continuance of Job's piety.

"Thus did Job continually." Marg.: "All the days;" either, while the feast lasted; or rather, at the conclusion of every such feast. Job's piety habitual and constant. Mark of his sincerity. He who serves God uprightly will serve Him continually [*M. Henry*]. The same occasions always liable to bring the same sins. Same corrupt nature always present. *Fresh sins require fresh pardon.* Renewed pardon requires renewed application to the atoning blood. The blood of Jesus a fountain ever full and ever free. *Prayer and care to follow the godly through life.* Constant washing of the feet needed (John xiii. 10).

CHAPTER I. 6—12

THIRD PART OF PROSE INTRODUCTION.

I. The Celestial Council (verse 6). "There was a day." *What God decrees in eternity has its day of accomplishment in time.* "Everything has its hour" [*Hebrew Proverb*]. "The sons of God came." Representation of God's court and administration. So 1 Kings xxii. 19. The veil separating the visible from the invisible drawn aside.

Reveals an assembly of God's angelic ministers and Himself among them. *All Job's trials the result of transactions in heaven.* The same true of the sufferings and death of Job's great Antitype (Acts ii. 23; iv. 27, 28); and of the trials of the least of His suffering members (Rom. viii. 28—30).

Angels.

"Sons of God," *i.e.*, angels, celestial spirits. So xxxviii. 7. All ministering spirits employed in Jehovah's service (Ps. ciii. 21; Heb. i. 14) Perhaps including the spirits of departed believers (Rev. vii. 13; xxii. 8, 9; Acts xii. 14, 15). "Sons of God," from their *nature;* "angels," or messengers, from their *office.* "Sons of God," by *creation;* "angels," by Divine *appointment.* "Sons of God," as resembling God,—(1) in spirituality of substance; (2) in intellectual, moral, and physical qualities (Ps. ciii. 20). Of various ranks and orders, and invested with various powers and charges (Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16; 1 Peter iii. 22; Rev. xiv. 18; xvi. 5; xix. 17).—"Present themselves before the Lord," as His ministers or attendants (Psalm xxii. 29; Zech. vi. 5; Luke i. 19). Ready to receive and execute His orders and to render their account. "Thousands at His bidding speed, and post o'er land and ocean." *As supreme Governor, God takes cognisance of all that is done in this and other worlds. Mighty spirits the ministers and executioners of His behests.* Such employed in the destruction of the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 1, 12, 13); in the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai (Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53; Ps. lxviii. 17); in the destruction of the Assyrian army and deliverance of Jerusalem (Is. xxxvii. 36); in the restoration of the Jewish church and state after the captivity (Dan. x. 20, 21; Zech. i. 10, 11, 20, 21; vi. 1—5); in the establishment and spread of the Gospel (Luke ii. 9—13; John i. 51); in the destruction of the kingdom of Antichrist (Rev. xix. 14); in the transactions of the last day (Matt. xiii. 41, 49, 50); in the service of individual believers (Heb. i. 14; Acts xii. 7); pre-eminently in that of their incarnate Head (Ps. xci. 11, 12; Matt. iv. 11).

"The LORD." *Heb.*, "Jehovah." Always with this meaning when printed in capitals. Indicates (1) The self-existing, eternal, unchangeable Being (Ex. iii. 14); (2) The faithful fulfiller of covenant relations and engagements. Not practically known to the patriarchs before Moses by this name (Ex. vi. 3). Appeared only at the Burning Bush as the promise-fulfilling God. The name applied to and appropriated by Jesus (Rom. xiv. 10—12; Rev. i. 8). Given specifically to the One True God who adopted the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for His people, when the world was apostatizing into idolatry. The name never applied to a false God or to any mere creature. Given however to an angel who is called "the angel of the Lord" or the "angel Jehovah," being the second person in the Godhead; the Messenger of the Covenant and Mediator between God and men, who afterwards became incarnate.

II. Satan's Presence.

"And Satan came also among them."

Satan.

Here first introduced under this name.

Observe—

1. *His name.* Denotes "the adversary." The devil so called (1 Pet. v. 8). The name without the article applied to an adversary in a court of justice (Ps. cix. 6). Other names—the Devil or Slanderer; the Old Serpent; the Great Dragon; the Tempter; the Wicked One; Beelzebub; Apollyon; the Prince and god of this world.

2. *His personality.* His personal existence is (1.) *In accordance with reason.* (i) Existences may be *above* as well as *below* man. (ii.) These existences *may fall* and become unholy as truly as man. (iii.) Fallen intelligent beings usually the *tempters of others.* (2) *Testified by the whole of Scripture.* The truth regarding him gradually developed in the Old Testament. Marked out as a serpent in the temptation of our first parents. Probably the lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets (1 Kings xxii. 21). The name itself given, 1 Chron. xxi. 1; Zech. iii. 1. His personality pre-eminently taught by the Lord Jesus Himself in the Gospels. (3) *Confirmed by universal belief.* The belief in the existence of such a spirit common to all nations.

3. *His nature and character.* A created spirit; probably one of the highest. A son of God by creation, like the other angels, and originally holy; but fell, apparently through pride (1 Tim. iii. 6; Jude vi.). Has become the tempter and accuser of men, especially of the good (Rev. xii. 10). The most finished specimen of unsanctified intelligence. His nature,—*great intellect employed for selfish and wicked purposes.* Designated by Christ a *liar* and a *murderer* (John viii. 44). Christ's whole life a conflict with him, according to the promise (Gen. iii. 15). The life of every believer a similar conflict (Eph. vi. 11—17; 1 Pet. v. 8). Believers made the theatre of Christ's continued victory over him. Already overcome by Christ on their behalf (Col. ii. 15). To be bruised under their feet shortly

(Rom. xvi. 20). Meantime to be steadfastly resisted (1 Pet. v. 9). Times of signal victory over him indicated in Luke x. 18; Rev. xii. 10. Seeks every advantage over us (2 Cor. ii. 11). Transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14). Is overcome by the word of God and faith in the blood of Christ (Rev. xii. 11). Law and justice, through sin, on Satan's side against man; (Heb. ii. 14); but through Christ's death, once more on man's side against Satan (Is. xlii. 21; li. 8; Rom. viii. 32—34). Believers to reckon on his repeated and sometimes sudden assaults. The more faithful and walking in the light, the more exposed to them.

4. *His works.* The agent in Adam's fall (2 Cor. xi. 3)—a wide-spread tradition. Sought to overthrow Christ and to draw Him into sin (Matt. iv). He blinds men's minds against the light of the Gospel (2 Cor. iv. 4). Seeks to catch away the seed of the word from the hearts of the hearers (Matt. xiii. 19). Aims at beguiling men's minds from the simplicity of Christ's doctrine (2 Cor. ii. 3). Affects men's bodies with diseases and infirmities (Luke xiii. 16). Endeavours to thwart the preachers of the Gospel (1 Thess. ii. 18). Employs his messengers to buffet Christ's servants (2 Cor. xii. 7). *Probably much of the unsteadfastness and discomfort of believers due to his agency* [*Homilist*]. In regard to Satan, the book of Job in close analogy with the whole Bible. Job's happiness the object of his envy, like that of Adam in Eden. Lying spirits, as well as ministering angels, sent forth from God's presence (also in 1 Kings xxii. 19). The thorn in the flesh from Satan, alike in the case of Job and Paul.—"Came also." Satan not less than other spirits subject to God's authority. Like them also employed in executing the divine purposes. An intruder into all sacred places (1 Kings xxii. 19, &c.; Luke, iv. 33). His punishment only gradually inflicted. Still allowed to move at large. —"Among them." As Judas among the Apostles. Still found in the assemblies of God's children. No place on earth too holy for his intrusion. Public ordinances special occasions for the exertion of his power. Present to distract the thoughts, defile the imagination, and harden the heart.

III. Jehovah's challenge regarding Job (verse 7).

"The Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou?" The highest fallen spirit amenable to Jehovah. *No creature able to outgrow his responsibility.* That responsibility not diminished by a course of sin. God's questions not for information to the questioner but conviction to the questioned. Similar questions to Adam (Gen. iii. 2); and to Cain (Gen. iv. 9). The question intended to open the way to Job's desired trial. At the same time lays bare Satan's character and doings. *The most secret malice open to the eye of Omniscience.*

"From going to and fro." Marks (1) Satan's *present circumstances.* Allowed still to roam at large, though ever in chains. Only *reserved* to the judgment of eternal fire (Jude vi.; Matt. xxv. 52). (2) His *terrible activity.* Satan no laggard. Ever on the wing. In constant quest of opportunities of mischief (1 Peter v. 8). A true Apollyon; assiduous in his endeavours to *destroy.* (3) His *homelessness and unrest.* Like Cain, a vagabond in the earth. Seeks rest and finds none (Matt. xii. 45). *No rest for a depraved spirit* (Is. lvii. 20, 21). (4) His *constant increase of knowledge.* Same word implies "*Search*" (Num. xi. 8; 2 Sam. xxiv. 2). Satan ever prying into the ways and circumstances of men. Constantly increasing his knowledge with a view to destroy.—"In the earth." This earth now the permitted sphere of his activity. No place therefore secure from his attacks. *Good to remember we are in a world where Satan is, and is ever active.* —"Going up and down in it." Intensifies his activity and restlessness. Satan's name among the Arabs, *El Harith*, "The Active," or "The Zealous." Seems to glory in his work. Knows he has but a short time (Rev. xii. 12). Goes up and down in the earth but finds no home in it. *Satan and all his children homeless wanderers in the universe.* His answer in keeping with his character. Tells only part of the truth. Says nothing of the evil he does and seeks to do. Unable to report any good deed, and unwilling to own to any evil one. His work had been to draw men away from their allegiance to God and to destroy their souls.—"Hast thou considered?" &c. Satan questioned as no unconcerned spectator. Allusion to his character as a spy, enemy, and accuser of good men. —"My servant Job." *God never ashamed to own his faithful servants. An interested spectator of a good man's ways and actions.* A faithful servant of God the most considerable object in the world to God and angels. "*A servant of God*" *the most honourable and distinguishing title.* May be mean and contemptible *without*, but all glorious *within* (Ps. xlv. 13). Job God's servant *consciously* and by *choice;* Nebuchadnezzar God's servant *unconsciously* and by *constraint* (Jer. xxv. 9). God's people proved by living as *His servants*, not as *their own masters.* "My servant Job," a stinging word to Satan. *A true saint is Satan's eye-sore.* A good man the special object of his attention and malice. Job mentioned by *name.* Implies intimate

knowledge and special regard (Ex. xxxiii. 12; Is. xlix. 1; Jer. xiii. 11; John x. 3).—"That there is," &c. God dwells on Job's character. Delights in contemplating his saints (Zeph. iii. 17.—"None like him," in the degree of his piety and fidelity. Degrees of excellence. Job not only the greatest but the holiest. *Eminence in goodness to be aimed at.* Paul gloried in being "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 5). His motto, "Forward" (Phil. iii. 11—14). "On to perfection" (Heb. vi. 1). God notices not only a man's piety but the *degree* of it. Gives to each his just meed of praise.—"A perfect and an upright man." Job's good character endorsed by God. Good to have *man's* testimony in our favour,—better still to have *God's*. God more observant of the good than the evil in his people (Num. xxiii. 21).

IV. Satan's accusation and proposal (verse 9).

"Doth Job serve God for nought?" Satan true to his name, the *Devil*, or Slanderer. Accuser of the brethren (Rev. xii. 10). *A good man's praise the reproach and torment of the bad.* Satan *exalts* a man's piety to make him *proud*, *denies* it to make him *sad*. Cannot deny Job's *religion*, but challenges the *ground and reality* of it. *A mark of Satan's children to be a detractor of true godliness.* Satan's method to begin by *questioning*. *Insinuates*, then directly *charges*. Always a liar. In Eden, called evil good, now calls good evil. Satan's insinuation the immediate occasion of Job's trial.—"For nought." Either (1) Without sufficient cause (John xv. 25); or, (2) Without regard to his own interest (Gen. xxix. 15). Job's religion charged with mercenary motives—his piety mere selfishness. *Bad men judge of others by themselves.* With carnal men *piety* is *policy*. A truth at the bottom of Satan's insinuation, though false in regard to Job. *Everything lies in the motive. A selfish piety no piety.* Common with Satan's children to call God's saints hypocrites. *An evil conscience makes men suspicious of others' sincerity.* Satan's charge against Job implicitly one against God himself and the plan of Redemption. If Job's religion is hollow, *all* religion is, and *Redemption is a failure.*—Satan's words true as a *fact*, though false as *motive*. *No man serves God for nought.* Godliness profitable unto all things (1 Tim. iv. 8; vi. 6). In keeping God's commandments is great reward (Ps. xix. 11). God himself the exceeding great reward of His servants (Gen. xv. 1). True godliness consistent with "respect to the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 26). Past and present mercies also not excluded from the motives to godliness (Rom. xii. 1). Yet true religion *more* than *gratitude for past* or *regard to future* good (Ps. cxix. 129, 140). Satan well acquainted with *mankind*, but ignorant of the *nature of true grace*. Not only a *deceiver* but, like all unregenerate men, *deceived* (Tit. iii. 3)—"Hast thou not made a hedge about him" (ver. 10). *Satan speaks truth when it serves his purpose.* The saint's happiness and enjoyment of the divine favour the object of his hatred and envy. God's protection of his servants a blessed truth. (Ps. xci.; cxxi.). His angels and still more *Himself* the hedge of His people (Ps. xxxiv. 7; cxxi. 3; Zech. ii. 5). Either is Himself the hedge or makes one. Satan would leap the hedge, but dare not, and cannot without permission.—"And about His house." Not only the godly but *their belongings* the object of divine care. Horses and chariots of fire around Elisha's residence (2 Kings vi. 17).—"On every side." Satan a wolf prowling round the fold and vexed to find no means of entrance.—"Hast blessed the work of His hands." Satan well aware of the source of Job's prosperity (Prov. x. 22). Satan no atheist. Practical atheism makes men deny what Satan admits. "The work of his hands,"—his undertakings and engagements, as a man, a master, and a magistrate. Job diligent in business as well as fervent in spirit (Rom. xii. 11. *God's blessing not with the idle but with the industrious.* All toil *bootless* which is *unblest by God* (Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2). Peter toils all night but catches nothing till Christ enters the boat (Luke v. 5, 6).—"But put forth thine hand now" (ver. 11). Satan's impudence equal to his malice. Gives God the lie and challenges Him to a trial. Asserts Job's hypocrisy and offers to prove it. Adopts the language of a suppliant. Satan prays, but in malice. Eager to see Job a sufferer and proved to be a hypocrite. Unable to put forth his own hand without permission.—"Touch all that he hath,"—children and possessions. The touch intended to be a destructive one (Ps. cv. 15). Satan's mercies cruel. *Earthly possessions subject to God's disposal.* Prosperity vanishes at his *touch*, (Ps. civ. 32). —"He will curse thee,"—reproach or renounce thee, as in ver. 5. The natural result, on the principle of *selfishness*. Common with unrenewed nature. Heathens in misfortune vilify their gods. Pompey, after a defeat, said there had been a mist on the eyes of Providence. *Margin*, "If he curse thee not." Probably an oath or imprecation, but partly suppressed. Profanity the devil's language; yet in God's presence keeps back from fear what men fear not to utter.—"To thy face,"—boldly and openly. Job's fear for his sons that they might have done it in their *hearts*. *Boldness and openness an aggravation of sin.* Charity thinketh no evil; malice thinks *all* evil.

V. The Permission (ver. 12).

"Behold." Marks (1) the strangeness of the thing; (2) the impudence of the demand; (3) the purpose of God to make the whole conspicuous. God's thoughts and ways above man's. His judgments a great deep. Makes the wrath of man and devil to praise Him. Glory to God and blessing to man by the permission now given to Satan.—"All that he hath is in thy power." Satan's prayer granted, and himself to be the instrument. A double gratification, but to issue in his own confusion. *Not always a mercy for a man to have his prayer answered* (Ps. cvi. 15; Hos. xiii. 10, 11). Job now, like the disciples, to be for a time in Satan's sieve (Luke xxii. 31). To be cast into the furnace, not to be consumed, but proved and purified. Not understood at the time, though sometimes for a moment apprehended (xxiii. 10). His ignorance of the fact the cause of his disquietude and perplexity. *Believers often ignorant of the cause and object of their trials* (John xiii. 7). God's *heart* always *towards* his people even when his *hand* seems *against* them. His dearest saints sometimes apparently for a time abandoned by Him (Ps. xxii. 1; 2 Chron. xxxii, 31). The most crushing trials neither inconsistent with His grace *in* us nor His love *to* us. The cup drunk by the Head often tasted by the members, though for a different object (Matt. xx. 23; xxvi. 39). Satan God's scullion for scouring the vessels of His household [*Trapp*].—"On himself put not forth thine hand." Satan a chained lion, and the chain in our Father's hand. *Believers tried no farther than is necessary.*—"So Satan went forth." Gladly and eagerly as a wolf with permission to enter the fold. Thought every hour two till he had sped his commission [*Trapp*]. *His diligence in doing evil to be emulated by us in doing good.*—"From the presence of the Lord,"—having been, like Doeg, detained against his will (1 Sam. xxi. 7). *God's presence no place for an unholy nature.* To "see God," the happiness only of the "pure in heart" (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 1, 3; Rev. xxii. 4).

CHAPTER I. 13—19.

FOURTH PART OF INTRODUCTION.—INFLICTION OF THE TRIAL.

I. Occasion of the trial (verse 13).

"There was a day." Satan watches for the time best suited for his designs. The occasion chosen that the trial might fall the more grievous (Is. xxi. 4). Diabolical wisdom in doing mischief. Satan's terrible malignity.—"His sons and his daughters were eating, and drinking wine." The children's hilarity to be an aggravation of the father's calamity. The more unexpected and unprepared for, the heavier the stroke. Satan likes to make his stroke tell. Turns mirth into mourning. Job's children to die when most likely to be sinning (ver. 5). Satan's object to destroy both body and soul at one stroke. Satan as well as Job knew the dangers incident to wine. *God's judgments often come when men are most secure* (Luke xii. 19, 20; 1 Thes. v. 2). Good to rejoice as though we rejoiced not (1 Cor. vii. 30). The Saviour's caution (Luke xxi. 34). Changes in circumstances to be prepared for (Prov. xxvii. 1). *A day may have a fair beginning and a foul ending.* 'In the greatest calm provide for a storm' [*Queen Elizabeth*].—"In their elder brother's house." Hence no ordinary feast. The celebration of the eldest son's birthday chosen with characteristic malignity.

II. The trial itself in its four particulars.

1. *Attack of the Sabeans on the oxen and asses* (ver. 14, 15). "There came a messenger,"—spared in Satan's malice to carry the news. A "cruel messenger" to be sent to Job, as if a "rebellious man" (Prov. xvii. 11).—"The oxen." Satan begins with the cattle. The trial must rise in a climax.—"Were ploughing,"* preparing for the next year's crop, thus also to be lost.—"Asses feeding beside them," so arranged that both might share the same fate. The picture of security and repose heightens by contrast the calamity of the attack.—"Sabeans." A warlike marauding people in the north parts of Arabia Deserta. Those in *South* Arabia, or Arabia Felix, *merchants*, not *marauders* (vi. 19; 1 Kings x. 1). Bedoween incursions able to reduce a rich man to poverty in a few days. *Satan at no loss for instruments to do his work.* Possesses a mysterious power to influence men's minds to evil. The ungodly already prepared for that influence.

* Oriental ploughing, as in the south of Europe, done by oxen. Plough of wood, consisting of a share, two handles, and a pole or beam. Drawn by two oxen yoked together, and guided by a ploughman using a goad.

Satan's temptations suited to men's natural inclinations. Bad men often used by God for the trial and chastening of his children. —"Fell on them,"—rushed on them with a view to spoil. An unprovoked attack. Exceptions to the general rule in Prov. xvi. 7. —"Slain the servants" *Preparation for death to be taken into daily duties.* Blessed to be ready when the Master calls. *Sudden death then sudden glory.*—"I only am escaped," by God's special Providence and Satan's malice. Some escape from danger as "brands plucked out of the burning" (Amos iv. 11).

2. *Destruction of the sheep by lightning* (ver. 16). "While he was yet speaking.' Fiendish rapidity of Satan's work. Aims at stunning and overwhelming the sufferer. Trials often like rapidly succeeding billows. Deep calleth unto deep (Ps. xlii. 7). Troubles seldom single. "Welcome misfortune, if you come alone" [*Basque Proverb*].—"Fire of God."—*Marg.*, "a great fire," (like Ps. civ. 16). "Hot thunderbolts" (Ps. lxxviii. 48). Rapid lightnings, apparently sent by God though really by Satan. A cut in the words put into the mouth of the shepherds. Act of an angry God. The object to represent God as cruel and unjust, and so bring Job to curse Him. A limited mysterious power given to Satan over the elements of nature (Eph. ii. 2).—"From heaven." From the upper regions of the air, but apparently from *God.* The air or lower heavens the place of Satan's special presence and operations (Luke x.18; Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12).—"Sheep." The greatest part of Job's wealth (ver. 3.) Most frequently used in sacrifice. Smitten, though sanctified by frequent offerings. God's ways often dark and mysterious.

3. *Capture of the camels* (verse 17). "Chaldæans," *Heb.* "Chasdim." The name related to that of Chesed, Abraham's nephew (Gen. xxii. 22). Two such peoples mentioned in Genesis:—(1) The old Semitic Chaldæans of the mountains, in the north of Assyria and Mesopotamia (Gen. x. 22; xi. 28, 31); Abraham himself of these (Gen. xi. 28). (2) The later Chaldæans of Mesopotamia, descended from Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. xxii. 22). Called by Jeremiah an "ancient nation" (Jer. v. 15). A fierce and warlike people (Hab. i. 6, 11). First subdued by the Assyrians. In time overcame their masters, and formed the Chaldæan or Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar, a viceroy in Babylon, about 600 B.C. Their empire overthrown by Cyrus, who took Babylon, 538 B.C. In Job's time a body of hardy mountaineers. Always strong enough to make such a raid. More fierce and powerful than the Sabeans. Strokes increase in severity. *Satan inflames his instruments with his own murderous passions.*—"Three bands." To attack in various directions and let nothing escape. (So Gen. xiv. 15). Three bands under so many captains, Satan really commander-in-chief.—"Fell upon the camels." *Marg.* "rushed." Made a raid upon them, as 1 Sam. xxiii. 27; xxx. 14. Arabs sometimes make a raid twenty or thirty days' march from their tents.—"Carried them away." Three thousand camels no slight loss. *Satan goes the full length of his cord.* More grevious to be stripped of riches than to be always poor.

4. *Loss of all his children* (verses 18, 19). "While he was yet speaking." Satan never at rest till he has done all the mischief he is permitted. *Good to be always ready for another and a worse encounter.* Seneca says, 'Cæsar sometimes put up his sword, but never put it off.'—"Thy sons." The trial reaches its climax. His sons the object of his greatest solicitude. The subjects of so many prayers might have been expected to be spared, or at least *some* of them. The mystery increases.—"Were eating and drinking." When Job feared most they might be sinning (verse 5). *Possible to be taken from the festive board to the Judgment-seat. Festivity unsafe without God and His blessing in it. Well to be prepared to pass from earthly joys to heavenly ones.*—"Behold." Marks the greatness of the calamity. Seven sons and three daughters,—the whole of Job's children,—all arrived at maturity,—all prosperous and happy,—cut off at one stroke,—suddenly and unexpectedly,—amid the hilarity of a feast!—"A great wind." A tornado, cyclone, or whirlwind. Common in the East. Mysterious power of Satan to excite the atmosphere into a storm 'Prince of the power of the air.' Wind in God's hand, but now for His own purpose, partially and for a time, transferred to Satan's (Prov. xxx. 4) —"From the wilderness." Whence the fiercest winds came (Jer. iv 11; xiii. 24). From the south part of the great North Arabian Desert (Is. xxi. 1; Hos. xiii. 15).—"Smote the four corners of the house." At once or successively; coming with force and steady aim as under Satan's direction. All the appearance of the work of an angry God.—"And it fell." The object for which Satan raised the storm. Such catastrophes not uncommon in the East. Houses of comparatively frail construction (Matt. vii. 27). Well-known violence of tornadoes. One in England, in 1811, tore up plantations and levelled houses with the ground, carried large trees, torn up by the roots, to the distance of twenty or thirty yards; lifted

cows from one field to another; and carried haystacks to a considerable distance. Camels sometimes lifted off their legs by Eastern whirlwinds. *God able to make our plagues wonderful* (Deut. xxviii. 59).—"Upon the young men." Mentioned as more likely to overwhelm the father; sisters included. —"And they are dead." Crushing tidings for a father's ears. *All* dead,—dead *all at once*,—dead *prematurely*,—dead by a *sudden, unusual*, and *miserable death*,—dead *as if by the hand of God Himself*, as Bildad regarded them,—dead *at the time that Job had most need of their comfort under his other calamities.* Job reduced, in one short day, from being one of the happiest of fathers to a state of childlessness and misery. *Our heaviest trials often through our sweetest comforts.* The sharpest thorns on the same tree with the loveliest flowers. The *beauty of all earthly blessings quickly blasted* (Is. xl. 6, 8). *Too much* not to be expected from *God*, nor *too little* from the *creature.*

CHAPTER I. 20—22.

FIFTH PART OF INTRODUCTION—THE RESULT OF SATAN'S ATTEMPTS.

I. Job's grief (ver. 20). "Then Job arose." Probably found by the tidings in the usual posture of Orientals. Aroused from wonted calmness. His nature now stirred to its depths. *Deeply moved*, but *not prostrated* by his calamities.—"Rent his mantle," or robe; long outer garment worn by men of rank (1 Sam. xv. 27; xviii. 4), and by priests (1 Sam. xxviii. 14; Ex. xxviii. 31); still worn by wealthy Arabs. Rent it in token of sorrow and humiliation (Gen. xxxvii. 34). Job neither too insensible to feel grief, nor too proud to acknowledge it. *Piety not stoicism;* sharpens rather than blunts sensibility. As little virtue in *not feeling* sorrow as in *being overcome* by it. Not to feel is to be either more or less than a man. Jesus wept. Insensibility under chastening reproved as a sin (Jer. v. 3; Hosea vii. 9). When God afflicts us we should afflict ourselves (Jer. xxxi. 18). Grace teaches us, not to be *without* sorrow, but to *moderate* it, and to connect with it *penitence and submission, faith and hope* (2 Cor. vii. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 13).—"Shaved his head." Another token of mourning (Ezra ix. 3; Is. xv. 2; xxii. 12; Jer. vii. 29; xli. 5). Forbidden by the law only in certain cases and in certain forms (Lev. xix. 27; xxi. 5; Deut. xiv. 1). Nature demands some external sign of grief, and religion does not forbid it.—"Fell down upon the ground." (1) In grief; so Joshua (Josh. vii. 6); (2) In humiliation; (3) In adoration. *Trouble a blessing when it leads to self-abasement before God.* Satan expected to see Job standing on his feet and cursing the author of his troubles.

II. His piety (ver. 20, 21). "And worshipped." Praised God and acknowleged his sovereignty. Bowed submissivly to His will and dispensations. Instead of cursing God Job adores His justice, goodness, and holiness. *Afflictions draw a godly man nearer to God instead of driving him from Him.* A sign of a gracious state to be *worshipping* when God is *chastising.* The best way to bear and be benefited by trials is to take them to God. *That trouble cannot but be blest which brings us to our knees.* Faith calms the crushed spirit by conducting it to a God in Christ.—"And said." Job opens his mouth, but not as Satan expected. *Serious and suitable considerations to be employed under trouble.* Truths suggested by religion to quiet the spirit and preserve it in patience. —"Naked came I forth," &c. Job's first consideration. Nothing originally ours. Man by nature destitute even of clothes for his body. The truth in the text the apostle's argument for contentment (1 Tim. vi. 7). —"Naked shall I return thither." Second consideration. Earth not our home. We return to our parent dust. Reference to Gen. iii. 19. These words probably copied or referred to in Ecc. v. 15, and xii. 7. *Our condition in this world of less consequence as we are so soon to leave it.*—Third consideration. We must leave the world naked as we entered it (1 Tim. vi. 7). Death strips Dives of his fine linen and Lazarus of his filthy rags. *Grace the only riches we can carry out of the world with us.* To be stripped of earthly possessions only a *question of time.* "Thither,"—unto my mother's womb, used figuratively for the earth. So the "lower parts of the earth" used for the womb (Ps. cxxxix. 15). The same term sometimes used both literally and figuratively in the same sentence. So Matt. viii. 22.—"The Lord gave." The language of truth and piety. Contrasted with that of pride and atheism,—"My own hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. viii. 17). Heathens by the light of nature called God the "Giver of good things." Power to get wealth the gift of God (Deut. viii. 18; Prov. x. 22). "Gave," and therefore has the right to withdraw at his pleasure. *What we possess we hold only as stewards of another's goods* (Luke xvi. 1—12; 1 Peter iv. 10.)—"The Lord hath taken away." God's hand in our

losses as well as our gains. Divine philosophy. So Joseph Gen. xlv. 5—8; David, Ps. xxxix. 9; Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "The Lord,"—not the Sabeans and Chaldæans, the lightning or the whirlwinds. *The philosophy that rests on second causes or natural laws a philosophy falsely so called.* Satan only the author of Job's calamities as he received permission from God. *The arrows God's, whoever shoots them.* Evil as well as good from God either directly or permissively (Is. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6). Man's and Satan's sin overruled by God for good; not therefore the less sinful (Acts ii. 23). God's hand in trouble *seen by the eye of faith*, an alleviation; otherwise an aggravation.

III. The Victory.

1. *Positive* side. *Job blesses God instead of cursing Him* (ver. 21). "Blessed be the Name of the Lord." The word chosen with reference to Satan's charge. The same word used, but in its opposite and proper sense. Satan thus entirely defeated. Every word of Job gives the lie to his slander. Power of grace that teaches us to bless God in troubles and adversities (2 Sam. xv. 26). *No* ground, even in the worst times, to *murmur* against God, *much to bless* Him. Such grounds are: (1.) Often greater love and richer blessing when He takes away than when He gives. *Our greatest trials and losses often our richest mercies.* "For all I bless Thee, most for the severe" [*Young*].—2. In the greatest sufferings and losses the believer's main interests are secure. The pieces of silver may be lost, the casket of jewels remains safe. (3.) The sufferings of believers are seeds to bear precious fruit both here and hereafter (Rom. viii. 28; Heb. xii. 10, 11). Believers therefore strengthened "unto all patience and long sufferings *with joyfulness*" (Col. i. 11). *True Christian piety the purest heroism.* Widely different from stoical insensibility and pride. Believers *weep*, but *bless God through their tears.* Job's blessing God must have sent an echo through the heaven of heavens. Unprecedented trials, heightened by the contrast of unprecedented prosperity, meet not merely with submission, but with blessing on the Author of both. To bless God in prosperity is only natural; to bless Him in adversity and trouble is music that fills heaven and earth with gladness. Job's calamities appeared only to argue God against him. Mighty faith that blesses God while smiting our comforts to the ground. The grace enjoined on N. T. believers, exemplified in this O. T. saint (1 Thess. v. 18). To bless God in our comforts the way to have them increased; to bless Him in our afflictions the way to have them removed [*Augustine*]. A thankful and pious spirit the true philosopher's stone—turns all things into gold. *Faith gilds our crosses and sees a silver lining in the darkest cloud.*—Matter for praise under the most trying dispensations:—(1) The past enjoyment of undeserved mercies so long continued; (2) The present enjoyment of *some* mercies however few; (3) The possession of God Himself as in Christ our God and portion; (4) The assurance that the heaviest trials work together for our good; (5) The hope of a better and enduring inheritance reserved for us in heaven.—"The name of the Lord,"—the Lord Himself as revealed to us in the Word. Here "Jehovah," the ever-living faithful covenant God of His people. The name here thrice repeated. Perhaps not without a mystery, like Num. vi. 24—27, compared with Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; 1 John v. 7. The name fondly dwelt upon by the afflicted patriarch. *The name of the Lord the tried believer's sweetest consolation and strongest support.* A strong tower into which the righteous runs and is safe (Prov. xviii. 10.)

2. *Negative* side of victory. *In all these trials Job kept from sinning* (ver. 22.) "Sinned not," as Satan desired and declared he would. Glorious triumph of grace to keep from sinning in such circumstances. Sinned not, either by impatience or passion. Reference to the case in hand. Grace given to keep us from sin, not absolutely, but relatively and comparatively. Sin more or less in all a believer's actions, though all his actions not sinful. Scripture written that the believer sin not (1 John ii. 1). Looking to *Christ*, Peter walked on the water; looking to the *wind*, he began to sink in it (Matt. xiv. 28—31). The flesh or old nature in a believer *must* sin; the spirit or new nature in him *cannot.* (1 John iii. 9). A constant struggle between the spirit and the flesh (Gal. v. 17). A believer's duty and privilege to walk in the spirit, and so be kept from fulfilling the desire of the flesh (Gal. v. 16). *I feel and grieve*, but by the grace of God I *fret* at nothing [*John Wesley*].—"Nor charged God foolishly." (1) Imputed no folly, injustice, or impropriety to God; (2) Vented no foolish and impious murmurs against Him. Ascribed nothing to God unworthy of His justice, goodness, and wisdom. Entertained no *dishonourable thought*, uttered no *murmuring word* against Him. *Impiety the greatest folly.* To murmur against God's dealings is as foolish as it is wicked. *To misconstrue God's character and conduct, the great sin to be guarded against under heavy trials.*

CHAPTER II. 1—6.

SIXTH PART OF INTRODUCTION.—PREPARATION FOR JOB'S FURTHER TRIAL.

I. Second Celestial Council (verse 1). "Again there was a day," some time after the events already related. Not said how long. Heavenly things represented under the figure of earthly ones, in condescension to our capacity. In heaven no succession of day and night (Rev. xxi. 25).—"The sons of God came," &c. Same scene represented as before. *God's providence continually exercised, and extending to all times and events.* His angelic ministers continually serving Him in their respective spheres (Rev. xxii. 3). "His state is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed," &c. Good to remember—"They also serve who only stand and wait." *Angels intensely interested in the salvation of men, and employed in helping to promote it* (Acts viii. 26; x. 3).—"Satan also came." Summoned, or expecting a fresh permission. Like Saul of Tarsus, "breathing out threatening and slaughter," and eager to get out a fresh commission of destruction (Acts ix. 1).—"To present himself before the Lord," having previously received a commission. This, therefore, omitted in the former account. *Men, angels, and devils, amenable to God.*

II. God's testimony to Job's steadfastness (verse 2). "From whence comest thou?" Happy for us that God's eye is continually on Satan's movements (Luke xxii. 31, 32).—"From going to and fro." Active and restless as ever. Says nothing of the harm he has done. *An evil doer seldom has the courage to speak the whole truth* (2 Kings v. 25).—"Walking up and down in it." God says the same thing of him, but tells us *how* (1 Peter v. 8). As Job still retained his *integrity*, so Satan his *assiduity*. Believers neither to be ignorant of his *devices*, nor forgetful of his *zeal*.- (Verse 3). "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Job still God's servant. *God's estimate of His people not diminished by their sufferings.* Precious testimony to the poor persecuted church at Smyrna (Rev. ii. 9)—."Still holdeth fast his integrity." Perfect and upright as before. "Still," notwithstanding these severe and accumulated trials. "Holdeth fast," implying exertion. Hard to hold out in such a storm. *Satan's* efforts to *rob* Job of his integrity, *Job's* to *retain* it. *Whatever a godly man loses he will keep his integrity.* "If you love my soul away with it," said a martyr at the stake, when tempted with a pardon to recant. Two things never to be let go—*Christ's righteousness*, and a *good conscience*. The Epistle to the Hebrews written to strengthen tried believers to hold fast their profession (Heb. iii. 14; iv. 14; x. 23, 35, 39). *God a concerned and compassionate observer of his people's conduct under trials* (Jer. xxxi. 18; Hos. xiv. 8). Commends their conduct *in* them, without at once delivering them *from* them. What is well done is sure, sooner or later, to receive His approving testimony. God neither conceals our graces nor our *improvement* of them. *To continue good while suffering evil, the crown of goodness.* A good man persevering in evil times an object of Divine admiration [*Seneca*].—God's further commendation of Job now enlarged. *Grace grows in conflict.* "Although thou movedst me against him." Implies successful urgency (So 1 Kings xxi. 25). Spoken after the manner of men. Satan an excellent orator if he but have an audience [*Trapp*].—"Thou movedst me." God "afflicteth not willingly" (Lam. iii. 33). Satan an earnest pleader *against* the saints: Christ as earnest *for* them (John xvii. 11, 15, 17). Satan's malice and calumny the occasion of Job's sufferings, and so of his subsequent glory. God's *secret purpose* to exhibit the reality and preciousness of His servant's faith. All questioning of the efficacy of Christ's redemption and the power of Divine grace, to be for ever silenced. *Not only events themselves purposed by God, but the way and occasion of their occurrence.*—"To destroy him," Marg., "to swallow him up." Satan's cruel intention. Satan's object in trial is to *destroy*; God's, to *prove and purify*. *God's sympathy with His suffering people.* What Satan called a *touch*, God calls *destruction*. *Awful judgment to be left in the hands of the roaring lion* (1 Peter v. 8).—"Without cause." (1.) *Without any special sin of his to merit it.* This testimony to be remembered throughout the book. Believed and maintained by Job; denied by his three friends. The cause of his perplexity and distraction aggravated by their opposition. *Tried believers often ignorant of God's thoughts concerning them, and of the cause and object of their trial.*—(2.) *Without ground or necessity for it.* Satan's charge proved by the result to be unfounded.

III. Satan's farther accusation (verse 4). "Satan answered the Lord." Satanic impudence. Though defeated, he has still an answer for God. *Boldness acquired by a course of iniquity.* A whore's forehead (Jer. iii. 3).—"Skin for skin." A proverbial expression. A mere question of barter. Job has yet a whole skin. He will part with anything to save his life. Will give up what he *has*, to save *himself*. "We must give up our beards to save our heads" [*Turkish Proverb*].—"All that a man hath he will give for his life." Not only his property and children, but probably his religion too. The test not yet sufficiently severe. The screw needs only to be driven a little farther. Satan argues still on the principles of man's selfishness. His words too often verified in fallen humanity. Peruvians sacrificed their firstborn to redeem their own life when the priest pronounced them mortally sick. Cranmer, in a moment of weakness, at first recanted in order to escape martyrdom. Abraham, when left to himself to save his life, gave up Sarah, and instigated her to tell a lie (Gen. xii. 12, 13). Yet the statement a libel upon the race. Satan true to his character. *Self-preservation a powerful instinct, but not supreme.* With a good man, subordinate to the principles of morality and religion. Yields to faith, hope, and charity. Paul counted not his life dear to him that he might finish his course and ministry with joy (Acts xx. 24). Daniel, Stephen, and all "the noble army of martyrs" give Satan the lie. Men and *women* have died, "refusing to accept deliverance, to obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. xi. 35). "Welcome, death!" said *Hugh M'Kail*, on the martyr's scaffold. "Welcome, if need be, the axe or the gibbet; but evil befall the tongue that dares to make me so infamous a proposal," said *Kossuth*, in reply to the Sultan's proposal to save his life by renouncing Christianity.—"Touch his bone and his flesh" (verse 5). Strike home at his person. Person nearer than property or children. Intensest pain and suffering intended. The iron to enter the soul. Satan's cruelty. A merciless tormentor (Matt. xviii. 34). Unwearied in his efforts to destroy *Always needful to prepare for new assaults.* Satan acquainted with the tendency of great bodily suffering. *Pain, a powerful means of disquieting and weakening the mind.* Without disordering its faculties, able to exhaust its energies and sink it into despondency. A piercing shaft in Satan's quiver. A thorn in the flesh Paul's great temptation (2 Cor. xii. 7, 9). Men "blasphemed God because of the *pain*" (Rev. xvi. 9). This Satan's expectation in regard to Job.—"He will curse thee," &c. Same assertion as before. Satan unwilling to yield. *Men, lost to all right principle themselves, have no faith in the virtue of others.*

IV. The renewed permission (verse 6). "He is in thine hand." *Before*, only his property and children; *now*, himself. *Saints, for trial, mysteriously given for a time into Satan's hand.* The persecuted church at Smyrna (Rev. ii. 10). Unknown to us how far bodily affliction may be from Satan's hand (Luke xiii. 16). Though God *lengthens* Satan's chain, he never *loosens* it. *The saints never in Satan's hand without Christ being with them* (Dan. iii. 25; Ps. xxiii. 4; xci. 15; Is. xliii. 2).—"But save his life." Satan's permission in regard to the saints always limited. He might scratch with his paw, but not fasten his fang [*Trapp*]. Job's life to be endangered, but not destroyed. Life and death in *God's* hand, not *Satan's*. A mercy to have life spared (Jer. xxxix. 18). Precious blessings still for Job to experience, and important work still for him to do. A man immortal till his work is done. The limit set in *Job's* case, not prescribed in *Christ's*. Christ, as the Shepherd, smitten to *death* in the room of the sheep (Zech. xiii. 7; John x. 11).

CHAPTER II. 7—10.

SEVENTH PART OF INTRODUCTION; JOB'S FURTHER TRIAL.

I. Satan's use of God's permission (verse 7).

"So went Satan forth." Glad in obtaining his wish, like Saul on his way to Damascus. Resolved to use his liberty to the utmost. Gets his will, but with limitation (Luke xxii. 31, 32).—"From the presence of the Lord." Like Cain (Gen. iv. 16). His object not to serve God, but torture man.—"Smote Job." Implies suddenness and vehemence. The hand heavy, though unseen. So Herod smitten by the angel (Acts xii. 23). Such smiting often ascribed to God, whoever the instrument (Deut. xxviii. 35). Satanic ingenuity in smiting the body yet preserving life and mental faculties. *Piety and patience under one trial, no security against another and a heavier.* Heavy burdens laid on strong

shoulders. God knows the metal He gives Satan to ring [*Trapp*]. Our comfort is, that He lays no trial on His children beyond what He enables them to bear (1 Cor. x. 13).

II. Job's Disease.

"Sore boils." *Heb.*, a bad, malignant ulcer, or inflammatory ulceration. Worst kind of leprosy. Inflicted on the Egyptians and threatened to the Israelites (Deut. xxviii. 27). Prevalent both in Arabia and Egypt. Made the sufferer loathsome to himself and his nearest relations (ch. xix. 13, 19). Appeared to make him out as an object of the Divine displeasure; as Miriam, Gehazi, and King Azariah. In an advanced stage, fingers, toes, and hands, gradually fall off (ch. xxx. 17, 30). Attended with great attenuation and debility of body (xvi. 8; xix. 20; xxx. 18). Restless nights and terrifying dreams (xxx. 17; vii. 13, 14). Anxiety of mind and loathing of life (vii. 15). Foul breath and difficult respiration (vii. 4; xiii. 15; xxx. 17). The skin itchy, of great tenseness, full of cracks and rents, and covered with hard or festering ulcers, and with black scales (ii. 8; xix. 20; xxx. 18; vii. 5; xxx. 30). The feet and legs swollen to an enormous size; hence the disease also called *Elephantiasis*. The mouth swollen and the countenance distorted, giving the patient a lion-like appearance; hence another name to the disease, *Leontiasis*. Contagious through the mere breath. Often hereditary. As a rule, incurable. In any case, one of the most *protracted* as well as dreadful diseases.—"From the crown," &c. So in Deut. xxviii. 35. The body one continued sore. Job escaped with the skin of his teeth—sores everywhere else (xix. 20). The *tongue* left free for an obvious reason. Satan's mercies cruel. Rare spectacle for angels; the holiest man on earth the most afflicted. Astounding sight for men; the richest and greatest man in the land made at once the most loathsome and miserable. *Impossible to say to what extent God may allow his dearest children to be afflicted.* After Job, no saint need be staggered at his suffering. Yet all Job's sufferings under Divine inspection and admeasurement (Is. xxvii. 8).—A circumstance marking the extremity of Job's affliction (verse 8). "And he took him a potsherd." As near at hand. Arab jars thin and frail, and easily broken—sometimes by merely putting them down on the floor. Hence fragments of broken jars found everywhere (Is. xxx. 14). A potsherd used by Job instead of a napkin. Possibly, however, an instrument still used in the East for similar purposes. Required to remove the purulent matter from his sores, and perhaps to allay their irritation. His hands and fingers themselves affected, or the foulness of his sores forbidding the touch. Without friend, physician, or relative to attend to his disease. In the case of Lazarus, dogs supplied the place of the potsherd (Luke xvi. 20—21). *God's dearest saints often reduced to the greatest extremities.*—"Sat down among the ashes." In token of mourning (xlii. 6; Jon. iii. 6; Matt. xi. 21); and of abasement (Jer. vi. 26; Is. lxi. 3; lviii. 5; Ezek. xxvii. 30). The ash-heap probably outside the city. Dung-hills still similarly used in the East. One part of the leper's affliction, that he was to be removed from society (Lev. xiii. 46; Num. xii. 14–15; 2 Kings xv. 5).

1. *Increased affliction calls for increased humiliation.*

2. *Self-abasement the certain way to Divine exaltation* (Jam. iv. 9—10).

III. Job's trial from his wife (verse 9).

"Then said his wife." Amazed at her husband's sufferings and piety. Herself already tempted and overcome. Spared by Satan to aid him in his attempts upon her husband. Another of his cruel mercies. She who should have been a comforter now becomes a tormentor. Her former piety now staggered at her husband's trials. Weak professors readily offended. The case of Adam and Eve expected to be repeated. Satan wise in selecting his instruments.

1. *Those who fall themselves usually employed in tempting others.*

2. *Strongest temptations and keenest trials often from nearest friends.*

"Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" Already affirmed by God (verse 3). *What is highly esteemed by God often reproached by man*, and *vice versa* (Luke xvi. 15). Job, in his wife's eyes, "perversely righteous and absurdly good" [*Sir R. Blackmore*]. *Perseverance in piety under heavy crosses a mystery to the world.*—"Curse God and die." Three horrid temptations—infidelity, blasphemy, and despair. Same word used as in i. 11; but properly denoting "to bless." Perhaps a bitter taunt, referring to i. 21—"Go on with your fine religion!" Probably—"Renounce God, who treats you so vilely." Includes the idea of uttered reproach and blasphemy (1 Kings xxi. 10). Job urged by his wife to fulfil Satan's grand desire.

1. *Satan's great work to set men against their Maker and His service.*

2. *His fiercest temptations often reserved for the time of greatest affliction.*

3. *Satan tempts men to put the worst construction on God's dealings, and prompts to the worst means of relief.* Points Job to the gulf of Atheism as the only refuge [*Davidson*].

4. *The holiest saints liable to the most horrid and blasphemous temptations.*

5. *The flesh in ourselves and others always*

an antagonist to faith and holiness (Matt. xvi. 22—23).

"And die." As the end of all your trouble. So Satan tempted Saul, Ahithopel, and Judas Iscariot. *No suggestion so horrid but Satan may inject it into a believing mind.* Job afterwards still pressed with the same temptation to suicide (vii. 15). *One of Satan's lies, that death ends all.* His object to make men die in an act of sin, without time or opportunity for repentance. *His friendliest proposals tend to damnation and destruction.* Would make men imitators of his blasphemy and partakers of his despair.

IV. Job's continued patience and piety (verse 10). "But he said unto her." Did not curse God, and then use Adam's excuse (Gen. iii. 12).—"Thou speakest," &c. Reproves with mingled gentleness and firmness. So Christ reproved Peter (Mat. xvi. 23). *Dishonour done to God to be at once discountenanced and reproved* (Lev. xix. 17; Prov. xxvii. 5; xxix. 15).—"As one." A gentle form of reproof. Husbands to love their wives, and not be *bitter* against them (Col. iii. 19). No fierce or furious language here. Her present speech not like her usual self. Speaks out of her ordinary character.

1. *Believers liable to be drawn into sin.*

2. *Love to be mingled with, and to moderate, reproof* (Eph. iv. 15).

3. *Reproof to be respectful, especially when addressed to relatives and seniors* (1 Tim. v. 1).

"As one of the foolish women speaketh." "Foolish," in the Old Testament, used for "sinful or ungodly." The language of Job's wife, that of foolish, profane, wicked women.

1. *The part of a fool to deny God and reproach His Providence* (Ps. xiv. 1).

2. *Folly to judge of a man's condition from God's outward dealings with him.*

3. *Unworthy thoughts of God the mark of a carnal, foolish spirit.*

4. *Sin not only vile but foolish,*—as truly opposed to *man's interests* as to *God's honour.*

5. *Impatience and passion under trouble the greatest foolishness.* Hard, and therefore senseless, to kick against the pricks (Acts ix. 5). Idolaters wont to reproach their gods in misfortune.

"What! shall we receive," &c.? What is sinful is to be put down, not with *rage* but with *reason.* Satan's horrid and blasphemous temptations not to be listened to for a moment. *Sharp reproof consistent with love and sometimes required by it* (Tit. i. 13). He who knows not how to be angry knows not how to love [*Augustine.*]—"Shall we receive good at the hand of God?" *Present miseries not to obliterate past mercies.* The greatest sufferer already the recipient of unnumbered benefits. God's mercies "new every morning." To sinners all is mercy on this side of hell. Mercy written on every sunbeam that gilds and gladdens the earth.—"And shall we not receive evil also?" "Evil" put for affliction and adversity. All comforts and no crosses, unreasonable to expect and undesirable to receive. Evil as well as good to be not only *expected*, but thankfully *accepted.* The question points to the *manner of receiving*, as well as the *matter received.* Both equally *dispensed* by *God*, therefore both to be reverentially *accepted* by *us.* Both worthy of God to *dispense*, and beneficial for us to *receive. The part of faith and love, to accept troubles as from a Father's hand.* The true spirit of adoption, to kiss the rod and the hand that holds it. *Thankfully to accept of good is merely human, thankfully to accept of evil is Divine.* In every thing to give thanks, *God's will in Christ concerning us* (1 Thess. v. 18). Job here greater than his miseries. More than a conqueror. One of heaven's as well as earth's heroes.—"In all this," his increased calamities as well as his wife's taunts and temptations. Job now lying under a quaternion of troubles—adversity, bereavement, disease, and reproach. More, however, yet remained for Satan to inflict and for Job to suffer. *Continuance of suffering often much more trying than suffering itself.* *Inward* affliction to be added to the *outward.* Much more trying. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a *wounded spirit* who can bear? (Prov. xviii. 14). A hint, perhaps, here given of further trial, with a less gratifying result.—"Sinned not with his lips." Vented no reflection on God's character and procedure. The greatest temptation in such circumstances to sin with the lips. The thing Satan desired, endeavoured after, and waited for. The temptation to murmur *present*, but *resisted and repressed.* Job still by grace a conqueror over corrupt nature. Not always thus walking on the swelling waters of innate corruption. Man's weakness to be exhibited, even in a state of grace. Hitherto Job shown to be the "perfect man" God declared him to be (Jam. iii 2). The Old Testament ideal of a perfect man and a suffering saint. An illustrious type of Christ in His suffering and patience (Is. liii. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 23). The type afterwards fails, that in all things Christ may have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18).

CHAPTER II. 11—13.

CONCLUDING PART OF PROSE INTRODUCTION.—VISIT OF JOB'S FRIENDS.

I. The Friends. (Verse 11.) "Now when Job's three friends heard." Rather, "three friends of Job." Probably friends most intimate with him, and from whom he had most to expect (ch vi. 14, 15). Perhaps connected with him by kindred as well as acquaintance and religion. Worshippers of the true God. Eminent in their day and country for wisdom and piety. Their religious views those of the age. Regarded retribution as very much a thing of this life. Hence their unfavourable view of Job's *character* from his *condition*. Much older than Job. Intending comfort, they become under Satan's influence, and from their narrow mistaken views, his severest trial. Instead of soothing they add to his grief,—by uncharitable suspicions, false reasonings, unseasonable admonitions, and bitter reproofs. *Good easily perverted to evil by Satan's malice.* Satan used Job's wife to *jeer* him out of his religion, and his friends to *dispute* him out of it [*Caryl.*]—"Came,"—probably, when his disease was now considerably advanced (vii. 4). Affliction should draw us *to* our friends, not drive us *from* them. *Adversity one of the best tests of friendship* (Prov. xvii. 17). Good manners to be an unbidden guest in the house of mourning. [*Caryl*]. *True friendship shewn in self-denying effort.*

"Eliphaz." An old Edomite name. A district also so called (Gen. xxxvi. 11, 15). Denotes "my God is strength." Indicates his parent's piety.—"Temanite." From the stock he sprung from, or the place (Teman) where he lived. Temanites celebrated for their wisdom (Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. 8, 9).—"Shuhite." Of Shuah, in the east part of North Arabia. Shuah one of the settlements of the sons of Keturah (Gen xxv. 2).—"Naamathite." From Naamah, probably a district in Syria. The town in Judah so named (Josh. xv. 41), too far distant.

II. Object of the Friends' visit. "Had made an appointment together." Probably living not far apart from each other. *Good to unite together in works of charity and mercy* (Mark ii. 3).—"To mourn with him." *Sympathy in sorrow an instinct of humanity and a Christian duty* (Rom. xii. 15). Example of Jesus (John xi. 33, 35). Job's own character (ch. xxx. 25). *Tears shed with our own, often the most soothing boon in sorrow.* A world of meaning in the child's words,—"I only cried with her."—"And to comfort him." The motive good, though the execution faulty. *A friend in trouble one of our choicest blessings.* A brother born for adversity. Comfort of mourners one of the objects of the Lord's ministry (Is. lxi. 2). See His mode of dispensing it, Is. xlii. 3; Matt. xi. 28—30. *To comfort in trouble one of the leading parts of Christian duty* (1 Thess. iv. 18; v. 11; Jam. i. 27; Matt. xxv. 36). Job's own character and practice (ch. xxix. 25).—Verse 12, "Lifted up their eyes afar off." Where yet they might easily have recognised him. So the father of the prodigal (Luke xv. 20). Job apparently now in the open air, and, as a leper, outside the city.—"Knew him not." So altered by his disease, his sorrow, and his place among the ashes. Marks the depth of his calamity. Unrecognizable by his friends. *When men know us least, is the time that God knows us best.* (Ps. xxxi. 7.)

III. Their Sympathy. Verse 12. "They lifted up their voice and wept." Marks their deep sympathy and their friend's deep sorrow. In the east, full vent usually given to grief (Gen. xxvii. 38; xxix. 11; Jud. ii. 4; Ruth i. 9; 1 Sam. xxiv. 16).—"Sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven." Casting it into the air, so as to fall down on their heads (Acts xxii. 23). Token of grief, astonishment, and humiliation towards God under a great sorrow (Josh. vii. 6; Neh. ix. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 12). Their feeling, consternation and sorrow at the sight of so sad a change.—"Sat down with him upon the ground" (verse 13). Another token of sympathetic grief (2 Sam. xii. 16; Is. iii. 26; Lam. ii. 10; Ezra ix. 3). True sympathy to sit down on the ground with one so loathsome in himself, and apparently an object of the Divine displeasure.—"Seven days." Usual time of mourning for the dead (Gen. l. 10; 1 Sam. xxxi. 13). Job's children dead, and himself virtually so. So in time of great affliction (Ezek. iii. 15). Depth of Job's calamity marked by that of his friends' sympathy.—"None spake a word unto him." True sympathy expressed by silence as well as tears. Silence usual and becoming in presence of deep distress (Lam. ii. 10). "A reverence due to such prodigious woe" [*Sir R. Blackmore*]. Unseasonable words an aggravation of the sufferer's grief. The

friends confounded at Job's calamity and unable to speak to it. Ignorant as to the cause, and apprehensive of Divine displeasure. *Prudence and skill required in administering consolation.*—"For they saw." His affliction apparently much greater than they had anticipated. The heart affected by the eye. *Good to place ourselves in the presence of sorrow* (Ecc. vii. 2).—"That his grief was very great." The stroke as heavy as it was possible for Satan to inflict, and the grief proportionate. *No sin for our feelings to keep pace with God's dealings.*

Lessons from Job's grief and the occasion of it:—

1. God's dearest children and most faithful servants may be the subjects of deepest suffering.

2. No part of piety to render the soul insensible to calamity.

3. The sudden removal of all earthly comforts possible, and to be prepared for.

4. Much of the sufferings of God's servants the probable result of Satan's malice.

5. Patience and submission to God's will consistent with the deepest grief.

Job in his deep distress a type of the "Man of Sorrows." His soul "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." In an agony, prayed the more earnestly that the cup might, if possible, pass from Him, yet meekly submitted. His bloody sweat, the result of a frame like our own convulsed by inward distress (Matt. xxvi. 37, 39; Luke xxii. 44).

CHAPTER III.

COMMENCEMENT OF FIRST GREAT DIVISION OF THE POEM.

Job's bitter complaint and outburst of despondency—the more immediate occasion of the Controversy between him and his friends.

I. Job breaks the prolonged silence (verses 1, 2).

"After this,"—viz.: the visit of his friends and the seven days' silence.—"Job opened his mouth." Denoting—(1) freeness of speech (Ezek. xvi. 63; xxix. 21); (2) earnestness in speaking (Prov. xxxi. 8, 9; Is. liii. 7); (3) deliberate and grave utterance (Ps. lxxviii. 2; Prov. viii. 6). Orientals speak seldom, and then gravely and sententiously. Job long silent from his extraordinary calamity. Profound grief shuts the mouth (Ps. lxxvii. 4). Pent up anguish now finds a vent. His sufferings probably increasing, and his feelings now irrepressible. Patient till God's anger seems to sink into his soul [*Chrysostom*]. Satan, to exasperate his feelings and depress his spirits, now acts on his *mind* and *imagination*, both *directly* and through his *disease*. The moment now arrived that Satan had been waiting for. *Usually great danger in giving vent to pent up feelings.* A double prayerful watch then needed not to sin with one's tongue (Ps. xxxix. i; cxli. 3). Danger of speaking rather from heat of passion than light of wisdom. Better for Job had he kept his mouth close still [*Trapp*]. "Either say nothing or what is better than nothing" [*Greek Proverb*]. When God's hand is on our back, our hand should be on our mouth [*Brookes*] *The maturity of grace proved by the management of the tongue* (Jam. iii. 2).—"Job spake and said." Every expression in Job's speeches not to be vindicated. The rashness of his language acknowledged by himself (ch. vi. 3). Job in the end not only hushed but humbled for what he had said (ch. xl. 5). In judging of his language however we are to remember:—

1. *The extremity of his sufferings and the depth of his distress.* His language extravagant but natural. Stunned by his calamities. Great sufferings naturally generate great passions. Job's sufferings to be viewed in connection with—(1) His high unblemished character; (2) His previous long continued prosperity; (3) The prevalent ideas as to Divine retribution.

2. *The time of his suffering also a time of spiritual darkness.* Satan's permission extended to the mind as well as the body. Mental confusion often the result of Satan's buffetings. *Times of outward trouble often those also of inward conflict.*

3. *The period at which Job lived.* Twilight as compared with that of the Gospel. Topics of consolation limited. No suffering Forerunner and Example to contemplate. Prospects dim as regarded the future world. No Scriptures with examples written for patience and comfort.

4. *The usually depressing nature of Job's disease.*

5. *The fact that the holiest saint is nothing except as strengthened and upheld by Divine grace.*

6. *Even in Job's complaint, no reproach is uttered against either the Author or instruments of his trouble.*

II. Job curses the day of his birth (verses 1—3, &c.).

"Cursed his day." Vilified, reproached, and execrated the day of his birth. A different word from that in i. 5, 11; ii. 5, 9; but the proper Hebrew word for cursing. Wished it to be branded as an evil, doleful, unhappy day. Similar language used by Jeremiah under less trying circumstances (Jer. xx. 14—18). The words mark:—

1. *Satan's defeat.* Job curses his *day*; Satan expected him to curse his *God*. Under *law*, Satan conquers; under *grace*, suffers defeat.

2. *Job's fall.* The language a contrast with i. 21; ii. 10. A secret and indirect reflection on Divine Providence. Job hitherto "a perfect man;" is he so now? (Jam. iii. 2). An end seen to all human perfection (Ps. cxix. 96). *A believer's fall consistent with final conquest* (Mic. vii. 8). Faith and patience may both suffer eclipse without perishing (Luke xxii. 32). A sheep may *fall* into the mire, while a swine *wallows* in it [*Brookes*]. *Satan's sieve brings out the saint's chaff.* The Scripture verified (Eccles. vii. 20; 1 Kings viii. 46; Prov. xx. 9; Jam. iii. 2). The man Christ Jesus the only Righteous One (1 John ii. 1). Tempted in all points, yet without sin (Heb. iv. 15). The greatest sufferer, yet His only cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me" (Matt. xxvii. 46). Endured anguish and temptation without abatement of love or trace of impatience. Thought also of the day of His birth, but with thankfulness and praise (Ps. xxii. 9, 10).

3. *The presence of the flesh in believers.* In ch. i. 21 and ii. 10, the *Spirit* spoke in Job; in iii. 3, &c., the *flesh*. The flesh in Job cursed the day of his birth; the spirit in David blessed God for the same thing (Ps. cxxxix. 14—17). *The believer is like Rebekah with two nations in her womb* (Gen. xxv. 23). These in perpetual conflict with each other (Gal. v. 17; Rom. vii. 25). Hence "out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing" (Jam. iii. 10).

4. *The folly and wickedness of sin.* Foolish to curse a day at all; wicked to curse one's birthday. *Every* day is God's creature; our *birthday*. His creature to us for *good*. Under a dispensation of mercy, every man's birthday either a blessing, or *may* be such. *Present misery not to obliterate the remembrance of past mercy.* The very thing which Job had formerly reproved in his wife (ch. ii. 10).

5. *The passionate vehemence of Job's grief.* Seen in the language and figures he employs. Verse 5. "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it." Take away its beauty and make it abominable; or rather, as the *margin*: "Claim it for its own;" take it back and keep entire possession of it. Allusion to primeval chaotic darkness (Gen. i. 2). — "Let a cloud dwell upon it;" or, "let a mass of clouds pitch their tent over it." The utterance of a deeply moved and excited spirit. Words similar in sense heaped together to intensify the idea. The eloquence of grief. — "Let the blackness of the day terrify it." Let whatever tends to obscure the day, as eclipses, storms, clouds, hot winds, &c., make it dismal and frightful. The day on which Christ suffered, thus "terrified," not by a natural but a supernatural darkness. "Surely nature is expiring, or the God of nature is suffering,"—said on that solemn occasion by a heathen philosopher.—Verse 6. "Let it not come into the number of the months;"—let it disappear from the calendar; be made to drop out of memory and existence.—Verse 7. "Let that night be solitary," ungladdened by a single birth, and destitute of all social converse and festivity. Returns to the night of his conception. Sublime accumulation of poetic figures and tragic expressions. — "Let no joyful noise be heard therein;" no song or sound of mirth; no voice of natal or of nuptial joy. Let it be devoted to the wail of sorrow, or to deep perpetual silence.—Verse 8. "Let them curse it that curse the day,"—either hired mourners, astrologers, or unhappy desperate persons; those accustomed to execrate daylight, the day of some special calamity, the day of their own birth, or that of some friend's death. All such to be employed in execrating the day of Job's birth.—"Who are ready to raise up their mourning;" or rather, as in the *margin*,—"to raise up a Leviathan,"—the crocodile or other monster (Is. xxvii. 1). Same persons described. Probable reference to some popular superstition, or practice in lamentation and execration. Job wishes his birthday to be execrated by such persons in the strongest and most energetic language.—Verse 9. "Neither let it see the dawning of the day." The Hebrew full of poetic beauty,—"Let it not see the eyelids of the morning." No cheerful rays of morning light glancing forth from the rising sun, to succeed that baleful night. Picture of eternal darkness. *Heaven a nightless day, hell a dayless night* [*Trapp*].

III. Job wishes he had never been, or had died when he began to live (verse 11).

"Why died I not from the womb?" In the impetuosity and perplexity of his spirit, puts it in the form of a question. Questions often asked by a troubled spirit in petulance and rebellion. These questions among the things confessed by Job with humiliation and repentance (ch. xlii. 6). "God's judgments a great deep; and he who asks *why*, will be

driven out on this deep, for there is no chart to guide us" [*Beecher*]. That our times are in God's hand quieted David's spirit, but failed to quiet Job's (Ps. xxxi. 15). Observe:—

1. *Times may come when the sweetest truths fail to comfort a child of God.* Unbelief and passion shut out the light and refuse to be comforted.

2. *Job's language the common lament of fallen and suffering humanity.* Heathen philosophy concluded that, in the view of the troubles of life, the best thing is not to be born at all; the next best is, to get out of the world as soon as possible.

3. *Job's question unanswerable but for the birth in Bethlehem.* Better not to have been born at all, if not *born again*. With a Saviour provided and offered, our birth either a blessing, or *might* be. Under an economy of grace, life spared in mercy (Lam. iii. 22; 2 Pet. iii. 15).

4. *A solemn question for each, Why did I not die from the womb?* Life invested with the most solemn responsibilities. A solemn thing to *die*, perhaps more so to *live*. Important and mysterious purposes connected with each one's life. The babe in the mother's arms may prove a Moses, a David, or a Paul. "What will ever come of it?" said one to Franklin in reference to the first discovered balloon. "What will ever come of that?" replied Franklin, pointing to a baby in its cradle. Job ignorant, when he asked the question, that his name should become a synonym for suffering patience.

IV. Job describes the grave and state of the dead (verses 13—19).

The description grand, tragic, and poetical. Given according to outward appearance and in relation to earthly experience.

Death and the Grave.

1. *Death a state of quiet sleep* (verse 13). A sleep as regards the animal frame. Gives the grave an attractiveness in a world of tumult and sorrow. Death a boon in such a world. The churchyard a hallowed resting place, where—"The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." Only sin disturbs this beautiful idea. Sin plants thorns and deadly nightshade among roses and evergreens. *Jesus takes away the sting of death, and makes the grave a bed of rest.* The death of a believer pre-eminently a sleep (1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 14; v. 10). The sleep in Jesus followed by a blessed awaking (1 Thess. iv. 16).

2. *The grave a place of general rendezvous* (verses 14, 16, 19). "The small and great,"—infants that never saw the light, with k[illegible] and their counsellors of state, all gather in the common ante-room of the grave, waiting the resurrection summons. In the great cemetery of Cairo, the magnificent mausoleums of the caliphs are mingled with the humble graves of the poor. Common receptacle for "the wise and foolish, cowards, and the brave."

3. *A place of absolute equality* (verse 19). "The small and great are there;" or, "are there the same." On the same level, and in the same condition. The bones of the prince undistinguished in the charnel-house from those of the peasant. "Dust to dust" pronounced over the coffin of the monarch as well as that of the pauper. The burial place of Alexander the Great shown in an obscure corner in Alexandria. *The only distinction in the next world determined by our character and conduct in this.*

4. *A place where the wicked cease from their oppression* (verses 17, 18). The grave an effectual check to the wrongs of the tyrant, the slave-owner, and the persecutor. Herod smitten in the midst of his murders and eaten up of worms (Acts xii. 23).

5. *A place of rest for the suffering and weary* (verses 17—19). "The prisoners rest together;"—hearing no more "the cruel voice nor sounding rod." Prisoners in the gold mines of Egypt, like slaves in more recent times, were driven to their work by the lash, their taskmasters being barbarian soldiers, who spoke a foreign language.—"The servant is free from his master." Slavery viewed as, in most cases, worse than death. To make the repose of the grave real and complete was the mission of Jesus, (Matt. xi. 28). The true rest in death taught in Heb. iv. 9; Rev. xiv. 13. The grave a sweet resting place only to those who have found rest in Christ. To believers, a place of rest—(1) From the cares and troubles of life; (2) From the oppression of man and the buffetings of Satan; (3) From the burden of a carnal and sinful nature; (4) From the conflict with sin and the flesh; (5) From painful labours in the service of Christ and humanity. *Do your work, and God will send you to rest in good time* [*Trapp*].

6. *A place exhibiting the vanity of earthly glory and riches* (verse 14). Kings and counsellors of the earth among the tenants of the tomb (Is. xiv. 6; Ez xxxii. 21, &c.). "Earth's proudest triumphs end in 'Here he lies.'" "This" (a shroud fastened and carried at the top of a lance by his own command), "this is all that remains to Saladin the Great of all his glory." "Conquer the whole earth, and in a few days such a spot as this (six feet of earth) will be all you have" [*Constantine the*

All the glory of Napoleon

dwindled down to a pair of military boots, which he insisted on having on when dying. Death and corruption mock "the pride of heraldry and the pomp of power." The bodies of Egyptian kings and statesmen embalmed and preserved for thousands of years. Wealth and art may preserve the body's *form*, but neither its life nor beauty. —"Which built desolate places for themselves." Only *that*. Their gain and glory for which they laboured, only a *desolation*. Palaces to become ruins,—pyramids and mausoleums to be rifled of their contents. The ruins of Cæsar's Golden Palace at Rome now partly covered with a peasant's garden; those of Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria scarcely distinguishable. The great pyramid at Ghizeh still standing, but shorn of its original beauty. The marble casing stripped from its sides to adorn a neighbouring city. Its granite sarcophagus, once containing the dust of Cheops, its royal founder, long empty. In the second pyramid, the body of its founder, Cephren, discovered a few years ago and brought to England. The Egyptian tombs themselves usually built in or near a desert. These tombs generally built on a scale of great extent and magnificence. Often hewn out of the solid rock and highly decorated. The rock-hewn tombs at Thebes about two miles in extent. Of the pyramids at Ghizeh, the largest occupies an area of 13 acres; the second 11. The whole one solid mass of masonry, with a small chamber or two in the centre. The height of the Great Pyramid, 479 feet, or 119 higher than St. Paul's Church in London. These pyramids built *by the kings themselves*, and *for* themselves. Begun at their accession, enlarged each successsive year of their reign, and closed, as if for ever, at their death. More care bestowed by the Egyptians on their tombs than on their dwellings. In Persia, royal sepulchres, apart from others, cut out high up in the face of steep cliffs. Shebna's vanity (Is. xxii. 16). Some take more care about their sepulchres than their souls [*Caryl*]. A heathen poet says: "Light is the loss of a sepulchre;" but *who can calculate the loss of a soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26). —(Verse 15). "With princes that had gold." *Had* gold. Their riches a thing of the past. Their gold unable to bribe away death. —"Who filled their houses with silver," which should rather have filled the *hungry*. Gold and silver often preserved to be a witness against its possessor. Treasure heaped together for the last days (Jam. v. 3). Perhaps ordered by the possessors to be deposited with them in their tombs, also called their *houses* (Is. xxii. 16; xiv. 18, 19). Its presence there a bitter mockery, its former possessor able neither to use nor recognise it.

IV. Job complains that life is continued to the suffering and sorrowing (verse 20.)

"Wherefore is light given to them that are in misery?" &c. A tacit reflection on his Maker's goodness, justice, and wisdom. Another of those things that Job repented of "in dust and ashes," (ch. xlii. 6).

Life

Wisely and graciously continued even to sufferers.

1. If *unprepared* for death, the sufferer is spared in mercy *for such preparation*. Death to the unprepared the harbinger of death eternal. An infinitely greater evil to be *cut off in sin* than to be *spared in suffering*. The life of *nature* mercifully continued, that the life of *grace* may be obtained *here*, and the life of *glory hereafter*.

2. If *prepared*, the sufferer's life is continued for *various wise and gracious purposes*.

(1.) *For proof and trial of his state*. Suffering a touchstone of sincerity. *Affliction the fire that tries the moral metal of the soul*. God uses not *scales* to *weigh* our graces, but a *touchstone* to *try* them [*Brookes*].

(2.) *For further sanctification*. Afflictions God's goldsmiths. The rising waves lifted the ark nearer heaven. Affliction the Christian man's divinity. Deepens repentance for sin, the cause of all suffering. Promotes the exercise of Christian graces, especially meekness, patience, and submission. Even Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Trials develope and strengthen Christian character. Each succeeding wave hardens the oyster-shell that encloses the pearl.

(3.) *For enhancement of future glory and happiness*. As we suffer with Christ we shall be glorified with him. Labour makes rest sweeter and the crown brighter.

(4.) *For the benefit and edification of others*. Suffering meekly borne by a believer exhibits the sustaining power of grace and so encourages others. The believer's lamp often trimmed afresh at a fellow-christian's sick bed. Christian animated to persevere through the Valley of the Shadow of Death by the sound of Faithful's voice before him. Four hundred persons converted to Christ by witnessing Cæcilia's demeanour under suffering.

(5.) *For the glory of Him who is both the Author and Finisher of faith*. Affliction meekly endured exhibits the faithfulness and love of God, and so leads both ourselves and others to praise Him (Is. xxiv. 15; 1 Pet. i 7).—Suffering a *blessing to society, and one of its regenerating forces*. Tends to humble pride and check evil-doers Exhibits

the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, and the certainty of death. Affords room for the exercise of sympathy, compassion, and benevolence. Gives scope to self-sacrifice, the noblest form of humanity.

V. Job expresses his longing for death (verse 21).

"Which long for death, &c." Said to be especially true of those who laboured in the gold mines of Egypt. A peculiar feature of Job's disease. Probably suicide the temptation presented to him by Satan through his wife. *Suicide Satan's recipe for the ills of humanity.* Job longs for death but is kept by grace from doing anything to procure it.

Death.

Our time in *God's* hand, not our own. *He is ill fitted to die who is unwilling to live.* Physical death only a blessing to him who has been delivered from *spiritual* death, and so secured against death *eternal*. Death a monster only to be safely encountered when deprived of his sting. His terrors only quenched in the blood of Christ. Death only to be desired—(1.) When our work is done; (2.) When God pleases to call us; (3.) That we may be freed from sin; (4.) That we may be with Christ (Phil. i. 23). *To bear life's burden well is better than to be delivered from it.* Grace makes a man willing to *live*, amidst life's greatest *privations and sufferings;* willing to *die*, amidst its greatest *enjoyments and comforts*.—"And it cometh not." The extreme of misery to desire death and not be able to find it (Rev. ix. 6). The misery of the damned. *Endless existence the crown of hell's torments.* Salted with fire (Mark, ix. 49). The *first* death *drives the soul out of the body;* the misery of the *second* death is, that it *keeps the soul in it.*

VI. Job plaintively dwells on his sad condition (verse 23).

Describes himself as "A man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in,"—visited with troubles which he cannot understand, and from which he sees no way of escape. *The soul in darkness misreads all God's dealings, and only looks on the dark side.* Satan had said of Job what Job here says of himself, but with greater truth. Satan truly but enviously viewed God as hedging Job round with *protection and blessing;* Job views God as unkindly hedging him round with *darkness and trouble.* Job ascribes to God what was really done by *Satan* with God's *permission*, or by *God* only at Satan's *instigation. The memory of past good too often obliterated by the experience of present evil.*—Represents his present calamities as the realisation of his worst fears (verse 25). "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me." A tender conscience fears reverses in the height of prosperity, and in consequence of it. A fall after great felicity an instinct of human nature. Paulus Emilius, a Roman general, on the death of his two sons immediately after an unusually splendid triumph, said: "I have always had a dread of fortune; and because in the course of this war she prospered every measure of mine, the rather did I expect that some tempest would follow so favourable a gale." A wise man feareth, but a fool rageth and is confident" (Prov. xiv. 16).

Fear of the Future.

Apprehension of future evil right and profitable—

(1.) When it preserves from carnal and careless security (Ps. xxx. 6, 7); (2.) When it incites to the use of right means to prevent it (Prov. xiv. 16); (3.) When it leads us to prepare for it by seeking strength to endure it; (4.) When it arises from the conviction of the uncertainty of earthly good (Prov. xxvii. 24); (5.) When it produces earnestness in securing a better and enduring portion (Matt. vi. 20); (6.) When it leads to fidelity in the improvement of present benefits.

Such apprehension wrong and hurtful;—

(1.) When arising from undue anxiety about the continuance of present mercies; (2.) When attended with anxiety and distrust about the future (Phil. iv. 6); (3.) When preventing the thankful enjoyment of present blessings (Eccl. ii. 23, 24); (4.) When leading to undue means to preserve them.

Apprehension and freedom from security no prevention of the evil (verse 26). "Yet trouble came." Learn—(1) *Prayer and piety are no security against trouble.* God has not promised to preserve his people *from* trouble, but to *support* them *in* it; (2) *No human caution or foresight is able to secure men against calamity.* The race not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. (3) *To sit loose to earthly comforts is the best way to retain them, or to bear their removal.* To God's people no trouble comes *unsent*, or *without a blessing in its bosom.* Trouble in the believer's inventory (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22) Among the "all things" that work together for his good (Rom. viii. 28). Unable to separate him from Christ's love (Rom. viii. 39). The storm makes the traveller wrap himself more closely in his mantle.

Trouble and its Uses to the Believer.

To believers trouble is,—

1. *Purifying.* Affliction is God's furnace for purging away our dross; his thorn for piercing through our pride. The Jews clung to idols till they were carried captive to Babylon. The three captives lost nothing in the furnace but their *bonds.*

2. *Preservative.* Often preserves from greater evils. Augustine missed his way, and so escaped intended mischief. *The Christian's armour rusts in time of peace.* Salt brine preserves from putrefaction.

3. *Fructifying.* Affliction makes both fragrant and fruitful. God's rod, like Aaron's buds, blossoms, and bears almonds. Flowers smell sweetest after a shower. Vines said to bear the better for bleeding. Believers often most internally fruitful when most externally afflicted. Manasseh's chain more profitable to him than his crown. Many trees grow better in the shade than the sunshine.

4. *Teaching.* Trouble teaches by experience. God's rod a speaking one. At eventide light. Stars shine when the sun goes down. Some scriptures not understood by Luther till he was in affliction. God's house of correction His school of instruction.

5. *Brings consolation.* *Suffering* times often the believer's *singing* times. Songs in the night. As our tribulations in Christ, so our consolations. Every stone thrown at Stephen drove him nearer to Christ. Jacob's most blessed sleep when he had only stones for his pillow. Paul's sweetest epistles written when a prisoner at Rome. The most of Heaven seen by John when a lonely exile at Patmos. The darker the cloud the brighter the rainbow. God's presence changes the furnace of trial into a fire of joy. God's rod, like Jonathan's staff, brings honey on its point.

6. *Conforms us to Christ.* God had one son without sin, but none without suffering. All His members to be conformed to His suffering image, though some resemble Him more than others [*Rutherford*].

7. *Is the way to the Kingdom.* Affliction only a dark passage to our Father's house,—a dark lane to a royal palace. The short storm that ends in an everlasting calm [*Brookes*].

CHAPTER IV.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JOB AND HIS THREE FRIENDS.

First Course of the Speeches. First Dialogue,—Eliphaz and Job.

First Speech of Eliphaz.

Eliphaz censures Job for his impatience, and hints at sin as the cause of his suffering. Verse 1. "Then Eliphaz the Temanite," &c. First of the three in age and experience. The mildest of Job's accusers, and superior to the rest in discernment and delicacy. His tone friendly and modest, but pours vinegar rather than oil on Job's wounds. A wise man of the class of Solomon, Heman, and Ethan (1 Kings, iv. 30, 31). Maintains that no innocent person is ever left to perish (verse 7). His statements sound in themselves, but false in their application. His speech the product of a genuine, pious, wise man of the east. Characterized by the legality and narrowness of the age in which he lived. Sadly wanting in sympathy and heart. Eliphaz immensely Job's inferior in intelligence, though his superior in age.

I. Introduction (verse 2).

"If we assay," &c. Begins with gentleness and courtesy. *Reproof to be given, not only with love in the heart, but tenderness on the tongue.* The razor cuts cleanest when whetted with oil. Tenderness especially due to sufferers.—"Wilt thou be grieved," or "take it ill?" As difficult to bear reproof in trouble as it is to give it. *Patiently to bear reproof, the sign of an honest, if not a gracious heart* (Prov. xvi. 32). Next to the *not deserving* of a reproof is the *well taking* of it [*Bishop Hall*]. No little grace required to say "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness" (Ps. cxli. 5).—"But who can withhold himself," &c. The reason of his speaking. Compelled by conscience. Good to speak and act only from conviction of duty. Care to be taken, however, that that conviction be an *enlightened* one. *Compulsion* from *our own* spirit not to be mistaken for *impulsion* from *God's. Better not to speak at all than not to speak to the purpose.*

II. The Reproof. Contains—1. *A testimony to Job's past character and conduct.* (v. 3, 4). "Thou hast instructed many," &c.

Job's conduct to others in similar circumstances to his own. "Instructed,"—"strengthened," "upheld."—Noble testimony—(1.) To his *sympathy and warmth of heart*; (2.) To his *wisdom and intelligence*—"hast instructed"; (3.) To his *zeal and self-denying activity* on behalf of others—"instructed *many*"; (4.) To his *experience in the things of God*, fitting him for a spiritual comforter. Job's character not merely one of *uprightness and integrity*, but of *kindness and benevolence*. Eliphaz endorses the testimony—a "perfect" as well as an "upright" man. Does this, however, less to praise his *past*, than to censure his *present* conduct. Confirms Job's own testimony of himself (xxix. 13, &c.; xxx. 25). Job the opposite of a selfish character. Improved his prosperity and influence for the comfort and benefit of others. A true priest and minister to the neighbourhood in which he lived. Not only prayed and sacrificed *for* others, but imparted instruction and consolation *to* them. Not only feared God *himself*, but sought to lead *others* to do the same. Sought to stimulate to duty and to strengthen under trial. Performed for those in trouble the part of Jonathan to David (1 Sam. xxiii. 16). His conduct enjoined as a New Testament duty (Is. xxxv. 3; Heb. xii. 12). Practised by Christians as a New Testament grace (Rom. xv. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 15; Heb. vi. 10; 1 Thess. v. 11). The work and ministry of Christ himself, Job's antitype (Is. xlii. 3; lxi. 1-3). Instruction placed *first*, as the means and foundation of the rest. The *word of truth* the medium to be employed in healing sick and wounded spirits (Ps. cvii. 20).

Christian Ministry

Especially one of instruction and consolation (Is. xl. 1, 2). Requires an enlightened mind, a tender heart, and a gracious tongue. Abundant room for such a ministry in a sinning and suffering world. Dark minds, weak hands, and tottering knees to be met with everywhere. The feeble, the falling, and the fallen, the church has with it always. The whole creation travailing together in pain; and believers, with the first fruits of the Spirit, groaning within themselves (Rom. viii. 22, 23). Cases especially requiring such a ministry:—1. *Affliction*, personal or domestic; 2. *Bereavement*; 3. Temporal *losses and misfortunes*; 4. *Persecution* and *cruel treatment* from others; 5. *Spiritual darkness and temptation*; 6. *Sorrow* and *contrition for sin*; 7. *Infirmities of age* and *approaching dissolution*. "Till tears are wiped away, and hearts cease to ache, and sin no longer desolates, every believer has a mission in this world" [*Beecher*]. Grounds of consolation and support in the character and truth of God (1 Sam. xxiii. 16. The Old and New Testaments the storehouse of Divine consolations (Rom. xv. 4). Lamentations iii., Romans viii., and Hebrews xii especially rich in such topics. The believer and well-instructed scribe to be always ready to draw out of this treasury (Matt. xiii. 52).—Topics of consolation in time of trouble and affliction:—(1.) The *character of God, as compassionate and faithful*; (2.) The *hand of God in all our afflictions*; (3.) *God's gracious purposes* in sending trouble; (4.) The *shortness and lightness of affliction* as compared with the "eternal weight of glory" for which it is preparatory; (5.) The *promises* of pardon, grace, guidance, provision, and protection to the end; (6.) *Christ Himself* as our Redeemer, in whom we have all things; (7.) *His example* as a *sufferer*; (8.) His *sympathy in our affliction*.

2. *The censure.* "But now," &c. To commend with a "but" is a wound rather than a consolation [*Trapp*]. Christ's reproofs, however, sometimes given with such a "but" (Rev. ii. 14).—"Now it is come upon thee," —viz., trouble. Storms prove the ship's seaworthiness.—"And thou faintest." Same word as in verse 2, rendered "grieved." An unfeeling reproach. Eliphaz a sorry imitator of what he had just commended in Job. Forgets the unprecedented character of Job's sufferings. Charges him with being either a pretender to the virtue he had not, or a neglector of what he had. Job's antitype similarly taunted,—"He saved others," &c. (Matt. xxvii 42). Yet suggests an important truth both for Christians and ministers.

Ministerial Consistency.

Heed to be taken not to preach to others without practising ourselves. The people's ears not to be holier than the preacher's heart. Jewish Rabbies condemned for teaching others whilst not teaching themselves (Rom. ii. 21). Self application of enforced truth the preacher's duty as well as the people's. The exhortation of the *lips* to be seconded by the testimony of the *life*. *Present doings* not to shame *former sayings* [*Trapp*]. One said of Erasmus, "There is more of Christ's soldier in his *book* than in his *bosom*." The easiest thing to give good counsel, the hardest to act on it. Self application of Divine truth man's duty, but God's gift. Sustaining grace needed by the strongest as well as the weakest. The saddest fall, that "when a standard bearer fainteth" (Is. x. 18). To "faint" in the day of adversity proves our strength is small (Prov. xxiv. 10). *The believer's duty to do each day's work with Christian diligence, and to bear each day's*

cross with Christian patience. The charge of Eliphaz though not the kindest, yet true. Job had both "fainted," and was "troubled," or confounded. The language of chap. iii. a sad contrast to that of chap. i. and ii. The shield of faith vilely cast away. How is the mighty fallen!—*Faith and patience in the greatest saints subject to eclipse.* Job had with Peter walked on the water; but now, with Peter, begins to sink in it.—*Inconstancy written on all creature-excellence.* Only One able to say "I change not," (Mal. iii. 6). David's mountain stands strong till God hides His face, and he is troubled (Ps. xxx. 7). Job to learn that his own strength is weakness, and that his righteousness is of God and not of himself. The strong man must glory only *in the Lord* (ch. xxix. 20; Jer. ix. 23, 24). Job, like Paul, to be shorn of his strength, that the power of Christ may rest upon him (2 Cor. xii. 9). Only he who waits on the Lord renews his strength, so as to walk without fainting (Is. xl. 31). In spite of dashing waves the limpet clings to the rock through its own emptiness. —(Verse 6). "Is not this thy fear," &c. Apparently a cruel charge of hypocrisy. Probably, however, not so decided and direct as appears in our version. Perhaps more correctly read: "Is not thy fear [of God] thy confidence, and thy hope, the uprightness of thy ways?" That is, "Should it not be so?" Doctrine: *A man's religion ought to give him confidence in time of trouble.* Like his former statement, the question of Eliphaz a testimony to Job's piety. An endorsement of ch. i. 1. Job admitted to have been distinguished for his fear of God and integrity of life. The only question now, "Is it real?" Eliphaz begins to suspect it. —The "fear of God" another word for religion. That fear, when genuine, coupled with "uprightness" of life. *True religion ever accompanied with its twin-sister, morality.* True piety ought to give "confidence" in regard to the *present*, and "hope" in regard to the *future*. The words of Eliphaz a great truth falsely applied. The 46th Psalm an exemplification of that truth. Habakkuk's Song another (Hab. iii. 17, 18). For this result, however, the fear of God to be coupled with

Faith in God.

Job's *fear of* God unshaken, but his *faith in* God beclouded. A *past* religious and moral life in itself not sufficient to stay the mind in trouble. The peace of God that keeps the heart and mind, the result of *faith in Jesus Christ* (Phil. iv. 7). Not a blameless or God-fearing life, but a mind *stayed on God* and *trusting in Him*, keeps the soul in perfect peace (Is. xxvi. 3). Such a *trust*, however, the usual outcome and accompaniment of such a *life*. Faith *in* God, and the fear *of* God make the soul triumph in every trouble. "Let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them do their worst" [*Luther, when threatened by enemies*]. "My father is at the helm," enough to quiet the soul in every storm. "He has nothing to fear who has Cæsar for his friend" (*Seneca*]. For *Cæsar*, substitute *Christ*. *The privilege of believers, eagle-like, to hold on their career through storms and tempests.* "The righteous is as bold as a lion," *i. e.*, with faith in exercise. Job's faith, like that of the disciples, tested in a storm and found defective (Mark iv. 40). Sometimes, however, breaks through the cloud, and triumphs over all opposition (xxiii. 10; xvi. 19; xix. 25—27; xiii. 15). *There are times when the believer's faith is scarcely able to keep head above water.*

III. Exhortation, with veiled Reproof (verse 7).

"Remember, I pray thee," &c. Skilfully ambiguous. May serve either for conviction or consolation. *History a useful teacher, but requires intelligence to read its lessons.* The part of true wisdom to mark, record, and improve God's dealings in Providence (Ps. cvii. 43). His works made to be remembered (Ps. cxi. 4). Asaph's and David's conduct in times of trouble (Ps. lxxvii. 11, 12; cxliii. 5).—"Whoever perished being innocent?" Literally: "Who is that innocent person who hath perished?" Asks for any such known example. Eternity not in view. "Perished" by some signal judgment. "Cut off" by some sudden catastrophe. Reference to Job's own case. Job *not yet* "cut off;" hence *consolation* in the question. The innocent "cast down but not destroyed." Paul's experience (2 Cor. iv. 9; vi. 9). David's (Ps. lxxi. 20). Job *all but* "cut off;" hence the question for *conviction*. Can Job be an innocent person? No such person has ever perished. No example, according to Eliphaz, of a godly man cut off by any signal judgment or overwhelming catastrophe. The opposite side maintained by Job. The godly fall with the ungodly (ch ix. 22, 23). Same truth taught, Ecc. ix. 2, 3; Ez. xxi. 3. The godly often suffer while the wicked prosper (xii. 5, 6; xxi. 7; Ps. lxxiii. 3, 12). The first recorded death of a believer a violent and bloody one. Saints at times "killed all the day long," and their "blood shed like water" (Ps. xliv. 22; lxxix. 3). Paul glories in the long martyr-roll of the *Old* Testament, as the church has since done in that of the *New* (Heb. xi. 35-37). Thousands of the faithful "cut off" in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes

(Dan. xi. 33). Still, Job's case an unusual one, and not belonging to any of these classes. His crushing calamities apparently direct from the hand of God. Everything seemed to proclaim him an object of the Divine anger. "God smites, hence there is guilt,"—an instinct of humanity (Acts, xxviii. 3, 4). Hence the suspicion of his friends, and Job's own perplexity (ch. xiii. 24; xvi. 9—14; xix. 10, 11). *Faith has often a hard battle to fight against appearances and carnal reasoning.* Job's friends instead of aiding his buffeted and sometimes staggering faith, help his unbelief. Their object, to make him out, and bring him to acknowledge himself to be, other than he had appeared. The experience of Job a foreshadowing of that of Jesus (Is. liii. 3, 4; Matt. xxvii. 43, 46).

V. Eliphaz adduces his own observation for Job's conviction (verse 8).

"Even as I have seen." *Useful for the preacher to substantiate his arguments and appeals by facts of his own observation.*

Sin and its Consequences.

1. *Sin.* "They that plough iniquity,"—practise *wrong*, especially in relation to others. A cruel thrust at Job, as if this had been his character, and that for which he was now suffering. "*Plough*" iniquity—practise it carefully, industriously, painfully, perseveringly, and with expectation of profit (Prov. xxii. 8; Hos. viii. 7; x. 13. Sinners sore labourers (Prov. xvi. 27; Is. lix. 5; Jer. ix. 5). *Satan the worst master; keeps his servants at hard work with miserable wages.*—"And sow wickedness," or "mischief;"—continue to prosecute wicked and oppressive schemes. The character of tyrants to oppress others with the view of enriching themselves. *Sin gradual and progressive. One sin prepares the way for another.* Ploughing prepares for sowing. The sinner urged on to persevere in sin. One sin to be followed by another, *in order to gain the result*, as ploughing by sowing. "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. iii. 13). *Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it, we advance in it* [*Barrow*].

2. *Its consequences.* "Reap the same;" (1.) The profit of their sin. (2.) The punishment of it. Retribution corresponding with the sin, constantly recognised in the Bible (Is. xxxiii. 1; Rev. xiii. 10; Matt. vii. 2; Jam. ii. 13). Exemplified in Adonibezek (Jud. i. 7); and in the persecutors of the church (Rev. xvi. 6). The Egyptians, who drowned Israel's infants in the Nile, are themselves drowned in the Red Sea. Countries distinguished for persecution, as Spain with its Inquisition, and France with its Bartholomew Massacre, distinguished also for the horrors of bloody revolutions and civil wars. Charles IX. of France, who ordered the Massacre of 1575, expired in a bloody sweat, exclaiming, "What blood! What murders! What shall I do? I am lost for ever." Under God's government, *sin followed by suffering as a body by its shadow* (Num. xxxii. 23). Men constantly sowing either to the flesh or the spirit (Gal. vi. 7, 8). The crop according to the seed.

(Ver. 9). The fate of the prosperous wicked. Cruelly held forth by Eliphaz as if to terrify Job and identify his case with theirs. The case of Job and his children terribly resembling it. *Truth misapplied assumes the nature and produces the effect of error.* "By the blast (or breath) of God they perish." *A mere breath of God sufficient for the destruction of the ungodly.* "Thou didst blow with thy wind," sung over the ruin of Pharaoh's host and of the Spanish Armada. *The whirlwind that overthrows the dwelling and wrecks the ship, but the breath of the Almighty.* The wicked driven away by God's breath as so much dust or chaff before the wind (Ps. i. 4). The breath that made the world can as easily destroy it (Ps. xxxiii. 6).—"By the breath of his nostrils are they consumed," like vegetation scorched and burnt up by the hot wind of the desert (Jer. iv. 11; Ez. xvii. 10; Hos. xiii. 15). The life of the ungodly is—(1.) *Laborious and painful in its efforts;* (2.) *Often prosperous for a time in its results;* 3.) *Miserable in its end.* "Consumed," by Divine judgments in this life, or by the experience of His wrath in the life to come. The former mainly intended by Eliphaz, without exclusion of the latter. True, as to what *frequently* happens. Examples,—the Antediluvians, and the Cities of the Plain. Its *universality* implied by Eliphaz, but denied by Job (ch. xxi. 7—14; xii. 6). Sentence against an evil work not always speedily executed (Ecc. viii. 11). *Some* wicked men punished here, to save God's *providence; only* some to save his *patience* and *promise of future judgment* [*Augustine*]. The preservation of the ungodly only a reservation. God's forbearance no acquittance. Divine justice slow but sure. Has leaden heels but iron hands. The longer in drawing the arrow, the deeper the wound. [*Brookes.*]

(Verse 10). Same truth poetically set forth under another figure. "The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion,"—supply "is silenced." The *threatening of the rich oppressor and the terror inspired by it come to an end.* "Lions" used in Scripture as the symbol of cruel and rapacious men (Ps. lvii. 4; Jer. l. 17; Zeph. iii. 3). The figure common in Arab poetry for the rich and

powerful. Furnished by the deserts of Arabia in which Eliphaz lived. The reference cruelly intended by him to Job and his three sons,—"The teeth of the young lions are broken." *The means of wicked men's doing mischief and practising oppression ultimately taken from them.* The teeth of the tyrant and persecutor sooner or later broken. Examples:—Belshazzar (Dan. v. 22, 30); Herod (Acts xii. 23); Nero (2 Tim. iv. 17). Heartless allusion to the condition of Job and his family.—(Verse 11). "The old lion perisheth." Various aspects, and perhaps species, of the lion indicated. Usual with Arab poets to express the same thing by several synonymous terms; each, however, with a variety of idea. Various forms and degrees of wickedness, and various classes of persecutors and oppressors; as lions differ in ferocity, age, and strength. *Common with Scripture to represent moral character under the figure of various animals*: cruelty by the lion and bear; rapacity by the wolf and the leopard; subtlety by the fox and the serpent; uncleanness by the swine and the dog; innocence by the dove; meekness by the lamb; industry by the ant. Some animals with natures and habits for imitation, others the reverse. *The inferior creatures, in the variety of their natures and habits, the divinely-constituted symbols of the various characters and dispositions of men.* The natural world a Divine mirror of the moral and spiritual.

VI. The vision (verse 12).

"Now a thing was secretly brought to me," &c. The vision related by Eliphaz:—(1.) To gain authority to his own reasoning and doctrine; (2.) To reprove Job's murmuring, and sinful reflection on the Divine procedure; (3.) To humble his apparent self-righteousness, and convince him he was a sinner. The doctrine of the vision true but misapplied by the narrator. Visions frequently afforded in patriarchal times in the absence of a written revelation (ch. xxxiii. 15, 16). One of the "divers manners" (Heb. i. 1). Such communications given "secretly," in the absence of other parties, (Dan. x. 7, 8). Eliphaz probably awake and revolving past midnight visions,—"in thoughts," &c. The description allowed to excel all others of a similar kind in sublimity and horror. Sublime without being obscure, circumstantial without being mean [*Kitto*]. Wonderful grouping of impressive ideas. Midnight—solitude—deep silence—approach of the spectre—its gliding and flitting motion—its shadowy, unrecognisable form—its final stationary attitude—the voice—the awful silence broken by the solemn question of the spirit—the chill horror of the spectator—trembling in all his limbs—the hair of his body standing up from fear. *Much more connected with the earth than is ordinarily visible.* Man surrounded with a countless invisible population of intelligent creatures. "Myriads of spiritual beings walk the earth" [*Milton*]. *Man an object of intense interest both to good and bad spirits.* Communication with the spirit world at present confined within narrow limits; partly through our physical nature, still more through our fallen condition. Man in his present state naturally alarmed at spiritual and supernatural appearances (Dan. x. 7, 8). Special strength required to endure such appearances and receive such communications (Dan. x. 17—19). Flesh and blood unable to inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv. 50). Man's natural body to be changed into a spiritual one to hold fellowship with the spirit world (1 Cor xv. 44). —"Mine ear received a little thereof;" Heb., "a whisper." The amount received, only a whisper as compared with a full outspoken speech. All we know of God, a mere whisper in comparison with mighty thunder (ch. xxvi. 14). Little of Divine truth communicated compared with what is to be known (1 Cor. xiii. 9). The greatest part of what we know, the least part of what we know not Things heard by Paul in Paradise unlawful or impossible to be uttered (2 Cor. xii. 4). Truth communicated only as we are able to receive it (Mark, iv. 33; John xvi. 12). "Even in the Scripture, I am ignorant of much more than I know" [*Augustine*].—(Verse 16). "There was silence and I heard a voice;" or, "Silence, and a voice I heard," *i.e.* a still small voice, as 1 Kings xix. 12. Deep silence the result of the spectre's appearance, and the preparation for its communication. Silence within the hearer's soul as well as in the world without. Enjoined in the Divine presence and in receiving Divine communications (Hab. ii. 20). Silence in heaven before the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev. viii. 1). The "foot" to be "kept," and silent attention to be maintained in the house of God (Eccles. v. 1, 2). Preparation of heart necessary for receiving Divine truth (Ps. lxxiv. 8; 1 Sam. iii. 9). Silence from—(1.) The voice of pride and self conceit; (2.) The opinions and wisdom of the flesh; (3.) The desires and cravings of corrupt nature; (4.) The impatient clamourings of selfwill.

The Spectre's Communication.

(Verse 17). "Shall mortal man be more just than God,"—or, "be just before God?" The object of the communication on the part of the spirit.—(1.) *To silence man's murmurings*

against the Divine procedure, as if man were more just than God (ch. iii. 10—23; xxxv. 2; xl. 8). *To murmur under trouble is to reflect on the Divine wisdom and goodness, and to make ourselves more righteous than God.* In the view of Eliphaz, this the sin into which Job had fallen. The sin to which great and accumulated suffering especially exposes our fallen nature. That into which Asaph had nearly fallen (Ps. lxxiii. 2). *God as righteous when he afflicts a good man as when he punishes a bad one.* Jeremiah's Divine philosophy,—"Wherefore doth a living man complain?" (Lam. iii. 39). It is "of God's mercies" that a saint as well as a sinner is "not consumed" (Lam. iii. 22). One single sin, seen in its real character, enough to shut the mouth of every complainer. Just views of the character of God and of the nature of sin calculated to silence murmurs under heaviest troubles. (2.) *To humble man's pride, and to prove every man in God's sight a sinner.* The object of the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. The lesson Job was intended to learn, and *did* learn (ch. xlii. 5). Taught Isaiah by the vision of the Divine glory in the Temple (Is. vi. 1, &c.); and Peter by the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke v. 8). The object of the Gospel to teach how a man may be just before God. *The law-fulfilling and justice-satisfying work of Christ, God's way of making a man righteous before Him.* God justifies only "the *ungodly* that believe in Jesus" (Rom. iv. 4, 5; Luke xviii. 10, 14). The reason obvious (Rom. iii. 10, 23). To become righteous, a man must take the place of a *sinner*,—his real character. The sinner becomes righteous before God in *accepting the righteousness of another.* RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST,—our peace in life, our joy in death, and our passport into the New Jerusalem (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; Is. xlv. 24; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21). Job a "perfect man" according to law; but in order to evangelical perfection, his comeliness, like Daniel's, to be "turned into corruption" in him (Dan. x. 8). *The saint's highest attainment to know himself a poor sinner, and Christ a rich Saviour.* "I a poor sinner am, but Jesus died for me," (*Wesley's deathbed testimony*).—*The believer's perfection, thoroughly to know his absolute imperfection.* Education, example, correction, and punishment, may do much for a man, but cannot make him a poor sinner [*Krummacher*]. "A sinner is a sacred thing; the Holy Ghost has made him so" [*Hart*].

Verse 18. "Behold." Always indicating something important, and calling for special attention. Uncertain whether, in what follows, the spirit or Eliphaz himself is the speaker. The object,—to humble man, and more especially Job, as in nature and character so much inferior to the angels. The constant aim of Job's "friends," to bring him down from his excellency (Ps. lxii. 4).—"He put no trust in his servants." Angels God's servants by way of eminence (Ps. ciii. 20—21; civ. 4). *The highest honour of a creature is to be a servant of his Creator.* God's service not only our *freedom*, but our *glory*. God's dominion over all created intelligences. The Seraphim his servants. Man as well as angel *must* serve; but he may choose his master.

"Thou canst not choose but serve; man's lot is servitude.
But thou hast thus much choice—a bad lord or a good."

God puts no trust in the angels, as being:—1. *Mutable* and *unstable.* Many of them fell; others might, but for sustaining grace. God alone unchangeable (Mal. iii. 6; Jam. i. 17). Angels secure, like men, only by a Divine act of election (i. Tim. v. 21). 2. *Imperfect and liable to err.* Fallibility and imperfection stamped on all creature-excellence. God only wise (Rom. xvi 27); only holy (Rev. xv. 4); only true (John xvii 3). Infallibility a Divine attribute, claimed by the Pope while arrogating to himself, as the pretended head of the Church, the promise of the Holy Ghost made by Christ to His Apostles. —"His angels He charged with folly;"—(1) allowed; (2) marked; (3) visited, sin in them. "Angels," so called from their *office* as God's messengers or agents. "Sons of God," from their nature (see ch. i. 6). Probable allusion in the text to the fall of some of them (Jude i. 6);—"kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (2 Peter ii. 4). *Rebellion against God the height of folly in man or angel.* Sinning angels dealt with according to their folly (Jude vi.; 2 Pet. ii. 4). The fall of *angels* as possible and as likely as the fall of *men*. Their fall a mystery, but clearly revealed. Man's fall connected with that of angels which preceded it. *Fallen intelligences, human or angelic, naturally the tempters of others.*—The angel's fall a lesson of humility to man (verse 19). "How much less," *i.e.* can He trust *men*; or, "how much more" must He charge *men* with folly. The fallibility and imperfection of men argued from that of angels. Job pronounced and esteemed a "perfect man." His spirit and conduct under his trials at first in accordance with this character. Conscious himself of his spotless life (ch. xxix., xxxi). Too ready to glory in it (xxxi. 35—37). Appeared to maintain it in a way unbecoming in one who was a sinner (xxxiii. 9; ix. 17; x. 7). Needed to be taught more deeply the imperfection of his perfection. His perfection not even that of an imperfect angel, but of a *man*. The object of the Book of Job, as of God's dealings in general, to hide pride from man (xxxiii. 17).

The dust the place of the highest and the holiest before his Maker.

Poetical and affecting description of

Man's Condition and Circumstances.

1. *As inhabiting a frail and humble body*—(Verse 19). "Who dwell in houses of clay." Oriental houses of the poorer classes usually of clay or mud dried in the sun. These naturally of the frailest and humblest character. Contrasted with the houses of the great,—usually of hewn stone. Man's fleshly body so spoken of (2 Cor. v. 1). Adam = red earth. Hence used as the name of the race (Gen. ii. 15). Flesh a sign and cause of weakness (Is. xxxi. 3; Gen. vi. 3; Ps lxxviii. 39). Contrasted with the angels, who are spirits, and therefore strong (Is. xxxi. 3; Ps. ciii. 20). Man's present body as "natural," contrasted with his resurrection body as "spiritual" (1 Cor. xv. 42—44; 2 Cor. v. 1).

2. *Formed out of the ground and returning to it.* "Whose foundation is in the dust." The elements of man's body those of the ground on which he treads. Man frequently reminded of his origin to keep him humble. His lowly origin an enhancement of redeeming love. God's Son took not on Him (or, "took not hold of") the nature of angels, but that of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16). Man in his *creation* made *lower* than the angels; in his *regeneration*, *higher* (Ps. viii. 4, &c.; Rom. viii. 16, 17). His return to dust *natural*, but not *necessary*. The Divine sentence on Adam's transgression (Gen. iii. 19; Ps. xc. 3, 8; Eccles. xii. 7). Hitherto but two authentic exceptions (Gen. v. 24; 2 Kings ii. 11. "'Dust to dust' concludes earth's noblest song."

3. *Weak and easily destroyed.* "Crushed before the moth." Crushed to death *as easily* as a moth is crushed between the fingers; or, crushed "in presence of a moth," which can prove his death. Man's body so frail that the slightest accident can terminate his existence. Pope Adrian actually choked by a gnat. A dish of lampreys the death of an English king. Man's continued existence the result of Divine preservation (ch. x. 12). "Strange that a harp of thousand strings," &c.

4. *Constantly liable to death, and on the way to it* (verse 20). "They are destroyed from morning to evening." Liable every moment to accident, disease and death. A continual tendency to dissolution. The seeds of disease and death inherent in man's frame. Death the immediate consequence of the fall (Gen. ii. 17). Man's life itself is death in constant development. "The moment we begin to live," &c. Man crushed "between morning and evening." An insect life. Man an ephemeral; his life a day.

5. *Cut off in death from the visible world without ability to return to it.* "They perish for ever." Man's death a finality. Only *one* life. Appointed *once* to die (Heb. ix. 27). "The bourne from whence no traveller returns." Man as water spilt upon the ground, not to be taken up again (2 Sam. xiv. 14). Art can embalm and preserve the body, but not put life into it. Galvanism can move the limbs, but not restore the life. Resurrection here out of view. The text speaks of what is *apparent, natural, and ordinary*. Resurrection the result of a new dispensation and a second Adam. Jesus Christ the resurrection and the life. Christ the first fruits (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23). Specimens of bodily resurrection already afforded; — (1) In Christ himself; (2) In those restored to life by Himself and by others through His power; (3) In those who rose and left their graves after His resurrection (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). The resurrection of all believers at His second coming (1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 15—17). To be followed by a general resurrection (Rev. xx. 5; John v. 28, 29). A new earth the habitation of risen saints (2 Peter iii. 13).

6. *Unnoticed in death by higher orders of beings.* "Without any regarding it;"—*i. e.*, as to any appearance of it. No attempt made by angelic beings to prevent it. No expression heard of sorrow or concern on account of it. Man dies in silence from the other world as if unnoticed and disregarded. This, however, only in appearance (see Luke xvi. 22; Ps. lxxii. 14; cxvi. 15).

7. *Stripped of all the excellence possessed on earth* (verse 21). "Doth not their excellence which was in them go away?" Not only the best and most excellent thing which was *with* them,—as riches, dignity, power, &c.,—but which was *in* them,—as beauty and strength of body, powers and endowments of mind (Ps. xlix. 14, 17; Eccles. ix. 10). True, however, only in *appearance*, and in regard to the *body*. The spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc. xii. 7). All excellence departs from the *body*, but not from the *man*. *Excellencies of the spirit develope and bloom in a higher sphere. A holy character immortal, and survives the tomb.* Grace the only glory that a man can carry with him into the spirit-world.

8. *Dying without attaining to wisdom.* "They die, even without wisdom." Man attains in this life to comparatively little knowledge in *natural* things, and to still less in *spiritual* ones (1 Cor. xiii. 9—13). Sir Isaac Newton's death bed estimate of his attainments in science,—a little child gathering pebbles on the sea-shore, with the ocean

of unexplored knowledge before him. "The greatest part of what I know is the least part of what I know not" [*Augustine*].

Most die without true and saving wisdom (Matt. vii. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 15). Man's wisdom in life is rightly to prepare for death (Ps. xc. 12; Deut. xxxii. 29).

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ.—CONTINUED.

I. Application of the Vision (verse 1). "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints ('holy ones'—probably *angels*, as xv. 15; Dan. viii. 13) wilt thou turn?" Job to expect no countenance to his language either from holy men or angels.

Learn:—

1. *Vain for a sinner to appeal against God either to saints or angels.* Every angel in heaven will take God's part against the complaining sinner. Angels already taught the wickedness and woe of rebellion against God. Angels themselves charged with folly; how then dare *man* open his mouth? *The cry of a poor sinner heard in heaven, but not that of an unhumbled self-righteous complainer.* That cry heard when directed to *God*, not to *angels*.

2. *No ground in the text for the doctrine of angelic intercession or prayer to departed saints.* God the hearer of prayer; to *Him* all flesh are to come (Ps. lxv. 2). To pray to others in trouble or difficulty, an *insult* to God, as if either *unable* or *unwilling to* answer (2 Kings i. 3). An angel presents the prayers of saints to God, but he the "Angel of the Covenant" (Rev. viii. 3, 4; Mal. iii. 1; Zec. iii. 1—8). The only prayer in the Bible addressed to a departed saint, that of the rich man in hell, and then not heard (Luke xvi. 24, 27). *To intercede for others the part of saints on earth.* To apply for that intercession a privilege and duty (ch. xlii. 8; Jam. v. 15, 18; 1 John v. 16). Angels *ministering attendants on* believers, not *interceding priests for* them (Heb. i. 14). *One* Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. ii. 5). One Advocate with the Father (1 John ii. 1). One Priest in heaven who makes intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24). Men to come to God by *Him* (Heb. vii. 25; John xiv. 6). Angels employed by God for the benefit of his children (Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 11; Heb. i. 14). Prayer for that ministry to be addressed, not to the *servants*, but to the Master who sends them (Matt. xxvi. 53).

3. *Angels and departed saints to be "turned to," not for help and protection, but for example* (Ps. ciii. 20; Matt. vi. 10). Angels our example:—(1) In obedience; (2) In submission; (3) In humility; (4) In reverence. The prayer oftener uttered than realized,—"Thy will be done on earth," &c. God's will done in heaven:—(1) By *each* of its inhabitants; (2) Without *intermission* or *deviation*; (3) With *promptitude* and *cheerfulness*; (4) Without *murmuring* or *questioning*. Earth converted into heaven when this prayer is fulfilled. A consummation to be expected:—(1) From the prayer itself; (2) From express promises to that effect (2 Peter iii. 13; Is. xi. 9; Zeph. iii. 9).

II. The folly and effects of fretting against God (verse 2).

"For wrath (passion, and displeasure against God for his dealings in Providence) killeth the foolish man, and envy (*margin*, 'indignation') slayeth the silly one." Probably one of the traditional sayings of the wise in common use among the sages of Arabia. A specimen of the proverbial poetry of the ancients, and a good example of Hebrew parallelism. "Poems instead of written laws,"—one of the Bedouin's boasts. These maxims or wise sayings freely applied by Job's "comforters" against him. The present, like others, an important truth. The sentiment extended in the 37th Psalm. An unfeeling application intended by Eliphaz to the case of Job.

Learn:—

1. *It is the part only of fools to fret against God and his procedure.* To complain against God and His dealings as absurd as it is wicked. The extreme of folly for a *creature of yesterday* to find fault with or sit in judgment on the doings of the Eternal Creator. Rather may a child three years old censure the architect's plan of a palace, or an ignorant boor cavil at the complications of a steam-engine.

(2.) *Fretting against God's dealings brings its own punishment.* The complainer against God's Providence is his own executioner. The man that frets in trouble is like the bird which is said to eat its own bowels. "Envy," or impatient fretfulness, is "rottenness to the bones" (Prov. xiv. 30). Fretting and passionate complaining "kills," as—(1.) It robs of peace, which is the spirit's life; (2.) Affects the health, and hastens death; (3.) Injures the life and prosperity of the soul; (4.) Brings greater chastening and

punishment from God. No greater antagonist to health than a fretful spirit; no greater help to it than a contented and submissive one. Passion and impatience in trouble more hurtful and crushing than the trouble itself. True wisdom, as well as piety, under trial is, *to commit our way to God and rest in his wisdom and goodness* (Ps. xxxvii. 5—7).

III. Testimony from personal observation as to the prosperous wicked (verse 3—5).

"I have seen the foolish (ungodly) taking root," &c. The object of Eliphaz to confirm the former statement (ch. iv. 7—9). Unfeeling allusion to the case of Job. Crushing language to come from the lips of a professed friend and comforter. The tongue that uttered it as truly guided by Satan as that of Job's wife. Even Peter, by his carnal though friendly counsel, could earn the title of "Satan" (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). The *truth* of a statement no justification of its cruel and uncharitable application. From the statement of Eliphaz, still more or less realized, we learn concerning

Providence.

1. *That the ungodly frequently prosper in this life.*—(Verse 3.) "I have seen the foolish taking root," not only prospering, but apparently firm in his prosperity. Same sentiment and figure (Ps. xxxvii. 35; Jer. xii. 2). The prosperity of the wicked often a mystery and stumbling-block to the righteous (ch. xii. 6; xxi. 7; Ps. lxxiii. 3—12; Jer. xii. 1). The lot of the righteous and the wicked in this life often a contrast to each other, but a contrast the reverse of what might at first sight be expected (Luke xvi. 25). Wise reasons with God for allowing the ungodly to prosper. (1.) It exercises the faith and patience of the godly; (2.) Teaches the great inferiority of earthly to heavenly blessings; (3.) Confirms the truth of a judgment to come. Insolvable mystery but for a future state, which clears up all (Luke xvi. 25; Jam. v. 1—7). *The godly too much beloved to receive their portion in this life.* The good things of this world only the bones cast to the dogs [*Rutherford*].

2. *That the prosperity of the ungodly is followed by a speedy and certain, if not a sudden, fall.* "Suddenly I cursed his habitation,"—soon had unexpected occasion to mark it as accursed of God and doomed to destruction. The prosperity of the ungodly as insecure and temporary as it appears fair and promising. "Thou didst set them on slippery places." The fall often in this life. Examples: Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Napoleon. Yet not always (Ps. xvii. 14; lxxiii. 4; Luke xii. 16—20; xvi. 19, 22, 25). Nor even generally; maintained by Job against his three friends (ch. xxi. 7—13, xii. 6). If not sooner, the fall certain in death (Luke xvi. 23, 25; xii. 20).

3. *That the children of the ungodly often participate in their fall.*—(Verse 4). "His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate,"—ruined by a judicial sentence, or dying by the judgment of God (2 Kings, vii. 20). Veiled allusion to Job's children. Children often involved in the effects of their parents' sin (Lev. xxvi. 39; Is. xiv. 20, 21). A penalty embodied in the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 5). Repeated in the solemn declaration of Jehovah's name and character (Exod. xxxiv. 7). God's face set not only against the ungodly themselves, but against their family (Lev. xx. 5). Examples: Israel in the Wilderness (Num. xiv. 33); Achan (Josh. vii. 24); Ahab (1 Kings, xxi. 29); Gehazi (2 Kings, v. 27). So general as to have become a proverb in Israel (Jer. xxxi. 29; Ezek. xviii. 2). The children of the ungodly often inherit the father's punishment while imitating his sin (Is. lxv. 7). By repentance, the children escape many, if not all, the effects of their parents' conduct (Ezek. xviii. 14—17). No small part of a father's punishment, that his sin causes his children to suffer both *with* him and *after* him. A diseased constitution and a degraded position among the least of these effects. *Vicious habits and propensities often the sad inheritance bequeathed by ungodly parents to their children.* A powerful motive to such parents to repent.

4. *That the wealth of the ungodly often becomes the prey of the rapacious and covetous.* (Verse 5).—"Whose harvest (literally; or, 'what he has gathered,' *i.e.*, by a course of iniquity) the hungry eateth up, and taketh even out of the thorns (though guarded ever so carefully, as by a thick thorn-hedge); and the robber (as the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or 'the thirsty') swalloweth up their substance." Another cruel thrust at Job (ch. i. 15, 17). Crops in Syria and Arabia seldom safe from plundering Bedouin. Backslidden Israel obliged to hide away their grain from the Midianites (Jud. vi. 11). Earthly treasures such as thieves can break through and steal (Matt. vi. 19). A frail tenure that by which the ungodly hold their wealth. They often taken suddenly from it or it from them (Luke xii. 20). A canker in an ungodly man's gold and silver (Jam. v. 3). Sometimes, however, unintentionally laid up for the righteous to inherit (ch. xxvii. 17). Happy they on whose treasure no robber can lay his hand (Matt. vi. 20). With Christ we have "durable riches," and an inheritance laid up for us in heaven (Prov. viii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 4).

IV. Poetical aphorisms as to the origin and extent of trouble (verse 67).

"Although (or 'for'), &c." Perhaps another example of the traditional sayings of the East. A commonplace, intended partly for Job's reproof and partly for his comfort. Declares the origin, universality, and unavoidableness of trouble. Foolish to complain so bitterly of what is unavoidable and as universal as the race. A consolation to know that our sufferings are only such as are common to man (1 Cor x. 13). Suffering saints reminded that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren that are in the world (1 Peter v. 9). Both the reproof and the consolation inapplicable to Job's case, which was both *unprecedented* and *unparalleled*. Implied on the part of Eliphaz a want of sympathy and appreciation of the depth of Job's trouble. Hence felt by Job to be only an exasperation of his grief (ch. vi. 2—7).

The passage suggests concerning

Trouble.

1. *Its origin.* Negatively.—(Verse 6). "Not from the dust" or "ground." (1.) Not from mere chance, as a weed springing up from the soil; nor (2) From anything merely external; not from the *ground* but from *ourselves*. Positively.—(Verse 7). "Born unto trouble." Trouble is—(1.) From a necessity and law imposed on our existence in this world; (2.) From sin, which is the ground of that necessity. *The origin of suffering is in man himself as a child of fallen Adam.* All suffering the consequence of sin. Man is "born to *trouble*," simply because he is "born in *sin*" (Ps. li. 5). *Sin and suffering linked by bonds of adamant.* In the government of a good and righteous God, suffering could exist only,—(1.) As a legal necessity in consequence of disobedience to His laws; or (2.) As a moral necessity for the discipline of His erring children. All suffering in the world the consequence of the first transgression (Rom. v. 12);

'Of one man's disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe."

2. *Its universality.* "Man is born unto trouble."—(Verse 7). Suffering co-extensive with the race. An inmate of the palace as truly as of the prison. *Tears moisten the pillow of down as well as the pallet of straw.* One of the Hebrew terms for "man" is *enosh*, or "the miserable." Trouble makes the world akin. Suffering universal, because sin is so. Follows sin as its shadow. Its universality ought to render us—(1.) Patient under our own trouble; (2.) Sympathizing with that of others.—(i.) *Terrible evil of sin that has filled a world with suffering.* (ii.) *Heaven all the more desirable as entirely free from it.* (iii.) *Precious grace that converts it into a blessing.*

3. *Its certainty.* "As the sparks fly upward." This by a law of nature. Suffering in like manner a law of our being. Inseparable from our existence in the present life. *The hand that made us has, since the entrance of sin, made us sufferers.* Man born to *trouble* as truly as he is born to *live*. *Tears track man's pathway from the cradle to the grave.* No wealth can purchase, no power effect, immunity from the common lot. *Only through the incarnation and suffering of God's own Son, our suffering not necessarily eternal.* "The wages of sin is death,—the gift of God eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23).

V. The counsel of Eliphaz (verse 8—16.

"I would seek unto God (El, the mighty One), and unto God (Elohim, plural,—denoting totality of Divine perfections, or perhaps plurality of Divine persons), would I commit my cause," &c. This to the end of the chapter the best part of Eliphaz's speech. Comes down from the place of a reprover to that of a friendly adviser. His counsel characterized by *wisdom*, if not by *warmth*. Its only fault that it implies an uncharitable and unjust reflection, as if Job was a prayerless man (*See* ch. xvi. 20; x. 2; xii. 4; xiii 20; xiv. 6). At times, however, from darkness and confusion, Job, like other believers, hardly able to pray (xxiii. 3, 4, 15). *Our great comfort in trouble that we can address ourselves to God in it.* God to be sought unto in trouble,—(1.) For counsel and direction *in* it; (2.) For comfort and support *under* it; (3.) For grace so to bear it as to glorify God *by* it; (4.) For deliverance in His own time and way *out of* it; (5.) For the spiritual benefit and improvement intended *through* it. *True piety, and wisdom to commit our cause into God's hands* (Ps. xxxvii. 5). The very hairs of our head all numbered by Him (Matt. x. 30). Makes all things work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. viii. 28). To seek unto God in trouble an instinct of nature. Practised even by the heathen according to their knowledge (Jonah i. 5). In ordinary circumstances the Athenians sacrificed to the gods of the Pantheon, but in time of calamity prayed to the Unknown God (Acts xvii. 23). *The attributes of God such as to render Him the proper object of prayer and trust in time of trouble.* These attributes described by Eliphaz as exhibited in His works.

Attributes of God.

1. *His Almightiness.*—(Verse 9). "Who doeth great things and unsearchable," &c. *A God almighty to help and deliver, our great comfort in trouble* (Ps. xlvi. 1; lxii. 8; lxv. 6). Nothing impossible with God. His almightiness seen in His works of creation, providence, and grace. His works in creation "marvellous" and "unsearchable," both for greatness and minuteness, number and complexity. His works in providence "unsearchable,"—(1) In the end designed in them; (2) In the manner of its accomplishment. "Deep in unfathomable mines," &c. More now *seen* in the works of creation than could even be *imagined* in the days of Eliphaz. The discoveries of the last three centuries give an emphasis to his words undreamt of at that period. Many of the numerous *nebulæ* or dusky spots observed throughout the heavens, already resolved by the telescope into innumerable stars, each itself a sun. Reason to conclude the same of the rest, though from their distance as yet unresolved. Millions of suns, probably with systems like our own, found to compose the Milky Way of which our solar system is a part. The microscope, on the other hand, reveals *animalculæ* so minute that a thousand millions of them together do not exceed in size a grain of sand; yet each having perfect and distinct formations and all the functions essential to life. *Such a view of God's almightiness calculated not only to deepen our reverence, but to increase our trust.*

2. *His goodness and benevolence*—(Verse 10, 11). "Who giveth rain," &c. Rain a striking display of God's goodness as well as of his power and wisdom. One of his most common but precious gifts (Ps. lxv. 9, 10; Jer. xiv. 22; Amos iv. 7; Zec. x. 1; Acts xiv. 17). One of the most beautiful as well as beneficent operations in nature. The evaporation of moisture, its suspension in clouds, its condensation and descent, carried on by the operation of natural laws of which God is the author and director. The changes of temperature on which this operation depends, all in His hands, and "unsearchable" to us. *Every drop of rain comes to us as a witness-bearer of the Divine benevolence* (Ps. lxviii. 9, 10).—"To set up on high those that be low," &c. The change on the part of thousands from wretchedness and despondency to gladness and rejoicing, often, especially in the East, the result of an abundant rain. *In this, as in other respects, the natural a beautiful and instructive figure of the spiritual* (Is. xliv. 3—5; lv. 10—13; Deut. xxxii. 2).

3. *His wisdom*—(Verse 12—14). "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty," &c. His wisdom displayed in overmatching the crafty and disappointing their schemes.—(Verse 13.) "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Quoted by the apostle in 1 Cor. iii. 19, to show that "the wisdom of men is foolishness with God." The deepest devices of carnal men in God's view only short-sighted contrivances of little children. Their "best laid schemes" often suddenly overturned by the slightest incident. Human "enterprises," most carefully prepared and likely to succeed, often made to collapse like houses of cards. The splendid Armada, designed by Spain for the overthrow of the Reformation in England, dissipated and destroyed by unfavourable weather. Of the three attempts of the French to effect a landing in Ireland, the first and second failed through the adverse elements, and the third by the influence of the change in Buonaparte's counsels. Haman's well laid scheme to crush Mordecai and the Jews ends in his own disgrace and ruin. At David's prayer and for David's deliverance, Ahithophel's sagacious counsel is turned into foolishness (2 Sam. xv. 31: xvi. 20—23; xvii. 1—14). The Birs Nimroud, on the plains of Babylon, a standing example of the "counsel of froward" Babel-builders "carried headlong." *Our affairs safe in the hands of One with whom the wisdom of men is only foolishness.*

4. *His compassion* (verses 14, 15). "But he saveth the poor from the sword," &c. (or, "He saveth the oppressed from their mouth, the poor from the hand," &c.) From their "mouth," open to devour, and from their "hand" lifted up to slay them. Examples: The enslaved Israelites delivered from the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. xviii. 10); Peter from the hand of Herod and the expectation of the Jews (Acts xii. 11); Paul from the mouth of the lion Nero (2 Tim. iv. 17). God's *goodness* exercised towards *men in general*; His *compassion* towards the *needy and oppressed.* The helpless and afflicted especially the objects of His regard (Ps. lxxii. 12, 13; ciii. 6). An additional reason for Job's seeking unto God and committing his cause into His hands.—The results on *others* from God's compassion exercised in the deliverance of the afflicted. (Verse 16).—(1.) "The poor have hope." Job in his affliction encouraged to hope in God from his dealings with others in a similar condition. The use to be made of all God's gracious interpositions on behalf of those in trouble (Ps. xxii 4, 5; xxxiv. 6, 8, 11; xl. 1—3). *Hope in God the object of the Scriptures and the examples of delivering mercy recorded in them* (Rom. xv. 4). Encouragement to hope, the actual result of God's dealings with Job (Jam. v. 11).—(2.) "Iniquity stoppeth her mouth" (found also in Ps. cvii. 42). Persecution and oppression often struck dumb,—

(1) by God's manifest deliverance of the poor that trusted in Him; (2) by His judgments on the wicked executed along with that deliverance (Ex. xiv. 25). God's *works* will put the ungodly to silence when His *words* do not. The time of the final deliverance of the godly that of the shame and confusion of the wicked (Dan. xii. 2).

VI. The plea of Eliphaz for Job's repentance (verses 17—18).

Holds out the benevolent object and happy effects of affliction. Job thus addressed as one needing repentance and now under the Divine correction. The statement true and applicable to Job's case, but not as Eliphaz supposed. Job's affliction not strictly a correction for sin, but to be employed as such for his spiritual benefit. His "captivity" to be "turned," and that upon his repentance. His repentance, however, not as Eliphaz thought, for *sins of life*, but for that of *cavilling at the Divine procedure*. The whole passage a fine specimen of ancient Shemitic poetry. Probably more of the wisdom of the ancients handed down in verse from the earliest times. Contains a highly coloured description of the happiness of the godly in the present life. Generally true, according to the Old Testament platform. In harmony with other Old Testament promises, especially in the Psalms and Proverbs. *New* Testament promises rather of *inward peace* with *outward trouble;* all our need supplied, and all things working together for our good (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Phil. iv. 19; Rom. viii. 28). The error of Eliphaz in making earthly prosperity the uniform reward of godliness. That error seen and opposed by Job. Some of the promises held out by Eliphaz felt by Job to be a cruel mockery and an aggravation of his grief. These promises however afterwards fully realised in his experience (ch. xlii.)—"Behold," &c. Calls Job's special attention to what he is now to advance. The thing stated strange in itself and not readily believed. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." Same sentiment in nearly the same words (Ps. xciv. 12). Two modes of correction employed by God—(1) By His Word and Spirit; (2) By His work in Providence. The latter here intended "Correcteth," or "rebukes," viz., with the "rod of affliction" Lam. iii. 1; Ps. xxxix. 10 11). The text contains:—(1.) A *truth* stated; (2.) A *lesson* drawn from it. The truth: *Blessedness found in Divine correction.* The lesson: *That correction therefore not to be despised.*

Divine Correction.

1. Its *blessedness.* Seen—(1) *In its origin.* Its origin—*Divine love* (Prov. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 6; Rev. iii. 19). Correction the part, not of a *judge* but of a *father* (Heb. xii. 7—9). A mercy to be *corrected* when we might have been *destroyed* (Sam. iii. 22). Sad token for a man when God will not spend a rod upon him [*Brookes*]. (2) *In its object.* Our *spiritual benefit* (Heb. xii. 11);—Repentance (Rev. iii. 19); Removal of sin (Is. xxvii. 9); Participation in God's holiness (Heb. xii. 10). *Affliction is God's medicine to heal, and His furnace to purify His children.* (3) *In its actual result.* Affliction in itself a fruit of sin, but in God's hand a *means of good.* When God corrects His children, He—(i.) *Supports* them *in* the affliction; (ii.) *Purifies* them *by* it; (iii.) *Delivers* them *out of* it. "None more unhappy than he who never felt adversity" [*Seneca*].

2. Its *improvement.* Here *negatively* expressed. "Despise not thou," &c. So Prov. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 5. God's corrections are not to be—(i.) Refused as something *nauseous*; nor, (ii.) Rejected as something *hurtful*; nor, (iii.) *Slighted* as something *useless.* The exhortation implies the opposite duty. God's corrections are on the contrary to be—(1) *Highly prized*; (2) *Carefully improved.* Prized, as—(i.) From a Father's hand; (ii.) Sent in love; (iii.) Designed for our highest good. Affliction to be *improved*—(1) By *consideration* of its *object;* (2) By *examination* into its *cause;* (3) By *endeavour* after its *fruit* (Lam. iii. 39—42). *Trials only profitable when we are rightly exercised under them* (Heb. xii. 11). *To be benefited by God's rod, it is necessary to be taught out of God's Word* (Ps. xciv. 12).—The correction that of "the Almighty," or All-sufficient. Indicates—1. His *benevolence* in the correction; the "Almighty" under no obligation to sinning creatures. 2. His *ability*—(1) To *sustain* us *under* it; (2) To *sanctify* us *by* it; (3) To *deliver* us *out of* it. *God's corrections are sores which He himself will heal again.*

Verse 18. "He maketh sore and bindeth up." Same truth (1 Sam. ii. 6; Hos. vi. 1). All pains and griefs from God. True even in Job's case, though not as Eliphaz supposed. This thought an aggravation to Job's distress. "Maketh sore," as a surgeon amputating a limb or cutting out a gangrene. The pain no further inflicted than is necessary (Lam. iii. 33). "And bindeth up,"—as a wound or amputated limb (Ps. cxlvii. 3). God himself the Physician of souls (Ps. ciii. 3). Jehovah Rophi (Ex. xv. 26). The office assumed and executed by the incarnate Son (Luke iv. 18, 23; Matt. ix. 12). The bandages employed—the doctrines, promises, and consolations of the Gospel (Ps. cvii. 20).—"He woundeth," as with a surgeon's knife or lancet. God wounds to

heal. His wounds faithful, as those of a friend (Prov. xxvii. 6; Ps. cxli. 5). Judicial wounds reserved for the head of obstinate transgressors (Ps. lxviii. 21).—"And his hands make whole"—literally, "sew up," viz., the wound. His own hands; implying—(1) *Readiness*; (2) *Tenderness*; (3) *Skill*; (4) *Success* in the operation. Learn—(i.) *Those wounds well and lovingly sewed up that are sewed up by the hands of the Almighty.* (ii.) *We may well endure wounds that are to be sewed up by such a Physician.*

VII. Motive to repentance drawn from the promises (Verse 19, &c.).

These promises held out on the supposition of *repentance and prayer*. Most of God's promises both to saints and sinners *conditional*. The blessings here enumerated both of a negative and positive nature. Most of them, according to the Old Testament dispensation, pertaining to the present life.

The Promises.

1. Negatively. *Safety and deliverance in times of trouble.* "In six troubles He shall deliver thee." "Six;" a definite number for an indefinite: many and manifold troubles" (Prov. vi. 16; 1 Pet. i. 6). "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Ps. xxxiv. 19). "One woe past, another woe cometh." "Lord, how are mine enemies increased" (Ps. iii. 1). Deliverance promised not in one or two troubles, but in *all*, however many (Ps. xxxiv. 19). Every new trouble needs Divine support and deliverance. "*In*" six troubles, viz.—the troubles you yourself are in; or, the dangers and calamities prevailing around you. "A thousand shall fall at thy side," &c. (Ps xci. 7). The promise is either—(1) to be kept from *falling into the trouble*; or, (2) to be preserved from *injury by* it; or (3) to be in due time *taken out of it*. Preservation *in* trouble, support *under* it, and deliverance *out of it*, all in the believer's charter. The cross not immediately taken from the shoulder, but strength given to bear it. The time and mode of deliverance best reserved in God's own hands. Deliverance from troubles either *temporary* and *partial*, or *final* and *complete*. Only the former usually experienced in this life. Here, trouble succeeds trouble as wave succeeds wave. One past, we are to prepare for another. Final and complete deliverance only at death. *Death strikes off every link of the believer's chain, except the last one, which is itself. That* link, which binds the body to the grave, struck off at the Lord's appearing (1 Cor. xv. 52, 57).—"Yea, in seven;" however accumulated in number and excessive in severity. "Seven" the number of *fulness*. Not one, nor many, but "all thy waves and thy billows," &c. (Ps. xlii. 7). The furnace heated "seven times" more than usual for the three young captives (Dan. iii. 19).—"There shall no evil touch thee"—so as really to injure or destroy (Ps. xci. 7, 10). The lions in the den lie harmless at Daniel's feet. The fire leaves the captive's hair unsinged, while it consumes their bonds (Dan. iii. 25). Even physical evil not always a real evil. Rutherford, in his exile, dates his letters from his "palace at Aberdeen." Such evils often the prevention of greater ones, and the means of obtaining blessings. Bernard Gilpin breaks his leg by an accident, and escapes the fires of Smithfield. "Children, we should have been undone, had we not been undone," said *Themistocles, when an exile at the Persian Court*. Joseph's confinement in prison his stepping-stone to the throne of Egypt.—*Kinds of deliverance promised.* (1) From *famine* (verse 20). "In famine," (—arising from failure in the crops—) "He shall redeem thee from death." Believers may *suffer in famine*, but, as a rule, not *die from it*. The righteous not even then forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Ps. xxxvii. 25). (2) From calumny (verse 21). "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue"—so as not to be hurt by calumny and false accusation. The tongue often a more mischievous instrument than the sword. Slander the choice weapon of the ungodly against the faithful (Jer. xviii. 18). Times of spies and informers, when no godly man appears safe. Yet God has a pavilion to hide His people from the strife of tongues (Ps. xxxi. 20). Jeremiah, Daniel, and the three captives assailed by the tongue, but delivered. Stephen, like his Master, falls by it, but only the sooner to gain his crown. Paul smitten with it, but the sooner obtains his desire of being with Christ. *God either gives to His people what He promises, or something better.* (3) From *foreign invasion*. "Neither shalt thou be afraid (*i. e.*, have any cause to be afraid) of destruction (—desolation from an invading enemy) when it cometh,"—or is coming, either upon others or near thyself. The believer not taken *out* of the evil, but kept *above* it. Preserved from real evil in it, and from fear regarding it. *Faith grasping the promises lifts the soul above fear.* The name of the Lord a strong tower, &c. "Fear not, thou carriest Cæsar;" for *Cæsar* substitute *Christ*. No *cause* for fear, therefore no place to be given to it. God a wall of fire round about his people (Zec. ii. 5). Makes a dense mist or wreath of snow such a wall at his pleasure. "The providence of God is my inheritance"—inscribed on an old house in Chester, the only one in the street untouched by the plague. (Verse

22.)—"At destruction" (—the desolation as already come)—"and famine" (—scarcity of food as its attendant—) "thou shalt laugh." The promise rises in a climax,—safety—fearlessness—triumph. Faith enables believers to laugh when others weep. A holy laughter put by God Himself into the mouths of His servants (ch. viii. 21; Ps. cxxvi. 2). Believers laugh in times of calamity, not from *want of sensibility*, but from *warrant of safety*. The godly can *laugh* from *satisfaction as to themselves*, while they *weep* in *sympathy for others*. To laugh at destruction *without* faith, is either stoicism or cruelty; to laugh *from* faith, the highest piety. Abraham laughed *piously* from *faith*; Sarah laughed *sinfully* from *the want of it*. *Faith and fidelity give songs in the darkest night of adversity*. God's sweetest consolations often reserved for the time of sorest tribulations. (4). From *wild beasts*. "Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth"—ravaging a country wasted by an invading foe. The incursions of wild beasts often spoken of as a Divine judgment (Deut. xxxii. 24; 2 Kings xvii. 25; Ezek. v. 17, xiv. 21). *Then* a much greater terror in the East than now Term probably included reptiles (Gen. iii. 1). Similar promise of Divine protection against them (Ps. xci. 13). Daniel's God able to shut the lions' mouths. Paul shakes off the viper that fastened on his hand and feels no harm (Acts xxviii. 1, &c.) Yet Polycarp and thousands more found their martyr's crown in the jaws of wild beasts. (5) From being hurt either by the *animate or inanimate creation*.—(Verse 23.) "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." The covenant made with believers includes the beasts of the field as their friends and allies (Hos. ii. 18). *Man in rebellion against His Maker has all creation at enmity with him*. Reconciliation with God through Christ restores man to friendship with the creatures. Dominion over the lower animals lost in Adam but regained in Christ (Ps. viii. 6; Heb. ii. 8). Neither stones can hurt nor beasts devour against God's will. Stones and beasts not only *not hurtful*, but made *profitable*. The lions that refused to touch Daniel devoured his enemies. The stones of the field afforded Jacob the pillow on which he slept his sweetest sleep.

3. *Point of transition to positive blessings*. These such as are held most valuable among men. Promised to Israel while faithful to God. *Not* all of them promised to believers, with the world in its present condition and Satan as its prince. To be enjoyed in that better state, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Is. lxv. 17—25; Rom. viii. 19—22; 2 Pet. iii. 13). A foreshadowing of that state in Job's condition after his restoration (ch. xlii. 10—17.) (1) *Domestic peace and felicity* (Verse 24). "Thou shalt know," &c., *i.e.*, by a Divine assurance and a happy experience. *To discern a mercy is itself a new mercy in its bosom* [*Brookes*]. "Thy tabernacle shall be in peace," or, "be peace,"—so thoroughly pervaded by it. In safety from others; in harmony with itself; and enjoying a general prosperity. "A peaceable habitation, a sure dwelling, and a quiet resting place," among promised blessings (Is. xxxii. 18). The voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous (Ps. cxviii. 15) *God's presence the only sure foundation of family peace*. That peace consistent with trial, sickness, and death in the dwelling 1 Pet. i. 6).—(2) *Safety and prosperity in our secular calling*. "Thou shalt visit thy habitation, (or perhaps, 'thy fold,') and shalt not sin;" (or, 'shalt not miss any of thy property;' or, 'not be disappointed in thy hope,'—*Margin*, "Shalt not err"). "Shalt visit thy habitation," after the day's journey or toil;" or, "shalt visit thy fold or pasture," as one looking to the state of his flocks and herds (Prov. xxvii. 23). *A great mercy to have a habitation to visit; a still greater one to be made to visit it without sin*. Domestic *peace* a precious blessing; domestic *purity* a still more precious one, and essential to it. *Better to be kept from sinning in our habitation than from suffering in it*. God's blessing on our family and affairs connected with *diligence in attending to them*. Great mercy to find our dwelling preserved from flames within and foes without. The contrary on one occasion one of David's great trials (1 Sam. xxx. 1—5). *Promises not falsified by trials that seem to run counter to them*.—(3) *A numerous and happy offspring*. (Verse 25). "Thy seed shall be great," &c. A numerous and powerful family accounted, especially in the East, one of the greatest blessings. The Bible expresses the feelings of humanity in reference to children,—"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. cxxvii. 5). One of the most frequently promised earthly blessings in the Old Testament. The promise supposes godliness in the parents, and, as its consequence, also in the children (Ps cxxviii. 1, 4). In the New Testament, the promise not so much of a *great* as of a *gracious* offspring (Is. xliv. 3—5). Contrary to his expectation, the text realized in Job's case, notwithstanding his bereavement (ch. xlii. 13).—(4) *A ripe old age with a peaceful death and burial*. (Verse 25). "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age," &c. "Shalt come." indicating—(1) Willingness to die; (2) A quiet passage. "To thy grave,"—buried in the sepulchres of thy fathers. A peaceful grave

and decent burial held, especially in the East, a matter of great importance. The want of it threatened as a Divine judgment (Deut. xxviii. 26; Jer. xxii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30). Graves in the East usually hewn out in the rock or dug deep in the sand. Bodies otherwise frequently exposed to birds and beasts of prey. The promise generally fulfilled. But the godless rich man died and was buried; while nothing is said of the burial of Lazarus. The promise of a ripe old age especially an Old Testament one. Made first to Abraham (Gen. xv. 15). Made generally to the godly (Ps. xci. 16). The desire to live to a good old age an instinct of human nature. Premature death often threatened to the ungodly. Length of days in wisdom's right hand (Prov. iii. 16). The general result of a holy, peaceful, and temperate life. A course of piety in every respect favourable to it. Long life connected both in the Old and New Testament with obedience to the fifth commandment (Ex. xx. 12; Eph. vi. 1—3). *A blessing to live while we can live to purpose.* Life to be measured, not so much by its *days* as by its *doings*. More important to live *well* than to live *long*. Inward development not necessarily the work of years. The promise rather of *ripeness for death* than *continuance of life*. *The faithful believer is satisfied with life whenever called to quit it.* Ripening for death the result of Divine grace, and found at all ages.

VIII. Application of the foregoing (verse 27).

1. *Affirmation of its truth with the grounds of it.* "Lo this—so it is." Good to speak with full conviction of the truth of what we advance. Personal conviction, however, not necessarily the proof of truth. Conviction may be more or less enlightened. Inspired utterances *always* true.—"We have searched it." Eliphaz the spokesman of the rest. Their discourses probably the result of previous conference. Their minds already made up on the subject of the Divine procedure in reference to the righteous and the wicked. The statements of Eliphaz *the result of study and examination.* The objects of his search were—(1) *The actual experience of men*, or *God's visible dealings in Providence*; (2) *The traditional maxims of wise men before him.* The examination, having little of revealed truth, both *partial* and *limited*. The period of Eliphaz the early twilight of the world. *All statements in respect to moral and religious truth to be the result of careful examination, according to the means within our reach.*

2. *Exhortation to personal self-application of the truth delivered.* "Know thou it." Truth heard, to become matter of personal experience. In order to this, it is to be—(1) Examined; (2) Pondered; (3) Received. The conduct of the Bereans (Acts xvii. 11). The tone of Eliphaz that of a monitor and teacher, as much older than Job (ch. xv. 10; xxxii. 6, 7; xlii. 16).—"For thy good." The hearer's good to be the speaker's aim (Eph. iv. 29). His duty to apply truth heard for his own advantage. The aim of Eliphaz, Job's repentance and consequent restoration to Divine favour. His motive good, but founded on a mistaken and uncharitable view of Job's character and the cause of his sufferings. Eliphaz, viewed as an example to preachers—(1) Sincere; (2) Earnest; (3) Courteous; (4) Employs variety of arguments and illustrations; (5) Adduces authorities; (6) Appeals to Divine revelation. Fails—(1) In sympathy and warmth of feeling; (2) In comprehensiveness of view; (3) In adaptation of his authorities to the case in hand; (4) In charitable judgment; (5) In appreciation of the case of his hearer.

CHAPTER VI.

JOB'S REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

I. Justifies his complaint (verse 2).

"O that my grief were thoroughly weighed," &c. Job's case neither apprehended nor appreciated by his friends. Desires fervently that his suffering and his complaining were weighed against each other; or that his calamity and the grief occasioned by it were thoroughly considered. The weight of it beyond that of the "sand" of the sea,—too numerous to be counted and too heavy to be weighed. The greatness of it beyond his ability to express, being also the cause why he had expressed himself so vehemently and inconsiderately;—"therefore my words are swallowed up," or, "were rash" or "vehement." Job's outward trials accumulated and intense beyond all precedent. These at first endured with extraordinary meekness and patience. *Now*, through the nature of his disease and Satan operating on his mind in consequence of it, all viewed on the dark side. *Our sufferings very much as we are made to view them.* The bitterest part of Job's sufferings now probably *internal* ones.

his external trials being viewed as sent from God, not in *love* but in unaccountable *anger*.—Describes these sufferings (verse 4) according to his views and feelings:—(1.) As "*arrows*:" Sharp and penetrating; coming swiftly, suddenly, and with great force; not one but many, coming in quick succession. (2.) "Arrows of the *Almighty*." Shot by Him as at an enemy, or as a mere butt for His archery. The *Almighty's* arrows must be especially sharp and deadly. That they were the *Almighty's* arrows the bitterest circumstance connected with them. (3.) "*Poisoned* arrows." Hence especially deadly, and discharged by a deadly foe. Indicates the intensely painful character of his sufferings; poisoned arrows inflicting especially painful and inflammatory wounds. (4.) These arrows not only discharged against him, but abiding "*within*" him, or being "*with*" him. His distress unintermitting. (5.) The *effect* of the arrows, their poison "*drinking up his spirit*"—exhausting his vital energy; or, his spirit drinking up their deadly poison.

The Arrows of the Almighty.

No power of man or angel able to withstand these arrows. No shield but the shield of faith able to receive them. No hand but the pierced hand of Jesus able to extract them. No balm but the blood of the Cross able to heal their burning wounds. One of these arrows able to bring down the stoutest adversary. "O Galilæan, thou hast conquered,"—said by one of the most determined enemies of Christ, Julian the Apostate Emperor, while dying on the battle-field. Job's miseries scarcely half-told in the preceding history. His outward calamities rather the *occasion* than the *cause* of his intensest suffering. A believer's inward trouble in time of trial sometimes greater than the outward trouble which occasioned it. His greatest distress often from a cause entirely different from the outward trial. Heavy outward trouble often light in comparison with inward distress from spiritual and unseen causes. The rankling arrows of the Almighty much more dreadful than either the loss of property and children, or bodily affliction. A terrible aggravation of Job's outward trouble. Apprehended wrath on the part of God the greatest of all troubles to a believer. The essence of the Redeemer's suffering, as of that of the patriarch's,—"My God, my God," &c. The awful experience of the lost. No greater hell than these arrows, "sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies" (Ps. xlv. 5). Fully discharged against the Son of God while standing as the Sinner's Substitute. That Substitute accepted becomes Himself the Sinner's Shield. The arrows felt in the conviction of sin (Acts ii. 37). Bringing the sinner to the feet of the Saviour they become arrows of *mercy*. The arrows extracted and the wounds healed by simple trust in Jesus and His blood. Discharged against the believer rather in his own *apprehension* than in *reality*. The apprehension intended as a discipline and trial of faith (Is. liv. 8; lvii. 17, 18). The experience removed when the object has been served (Jer. xxxi. 18—20). *Satan, working on our unbelief in time of trouble, able to make his own darts to be mistaken for the arrows of the Almighty*. The Almighty's arrows now in the Saviour's hand (Ps. xlv. 5; Rev. vi. 2).

Job's condition sufficient to account for his complaint. Even *beasts* do not utter their cries when they have food. (Verse 5)—"Doth the wild ass bray?" &c. The ass found in a wild state, large, fleet, and strong, in Arabia and west of the Euphrates. A hint at the want of sympathy on the part of his friends. It is easy to be quiet when suffering nothing. True sympathy makes us suffer in the distress of another (1 Cor. xii. 26). Natural to feel and utter complaint under severe suffering. Men cannot eat insipid and tasteless food without mixing salt with it. (Verse 6)—"Can that which is unsavoury?" &c. Salt so important with the Arabs as to be used as a synonym for food, their diet being chiefly vegetable. Mentions, as an example of the insipid, the "white of an egg," or perhaps the herb "*purslain*," proverbial among the Arabs for its insipidity. Perhaps Job quotes a proverb in common use. Indicates not only the naturalness of complaint, but the need of sympathy and encouragement in time of trouble. Insipid things need salt to make them palatable. Speech to be with grace seasoned with salt for the benefit of others (Col. iv. 6). "A word spoken in season, how good is it." "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop, but a good word maketh it glad" (Prov. xii. 25). The true humanity of Jesus seen in His craving for human sympathy in His distress (Matt. xxvi. 37—40). A bitter aggravation of trouble when "lover and friend are put far from us" (Ps. lxxxviii. 18). *The deepest poverty is to be without a friend to sympathize with us in our sorrow*.—Job reasserts his sad condition. (Verse 6)—"The things which my soul refused to touch," &c. Sad reverse when what we could not even touch before is now our daily but sorrowful and nauseous food. Job's loathsome ulcers now as his daily bread. Similar sentiment (Ps. cii. 9; xlii. 3; lxxx. 5). Learn: (1) *Painful reverses to be prepared for*. (2) *Moderation and humility our duty in prosperity*. Sometimes but a short step from affluence to

destitution (Prov. xxiii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 17). The beauty of health speedily exchanged for the loathsomeness of disease. A single day may put Dives in the place of Lazarus, *or a worse.* (3) *The uncertainty of earthly possessions and enjoyments to be improved to the securing of heavenly ones.* Grace teaches the rich man to rejoice in that he is made low (Jam. i. 10).

II. Repeats and justifies his desire for death (verse 8, &c.).

"O that I might have my request," &c. His request a release from present sufferings by death. Asked also as a favour from God by Elijah under the juniper tree, and by Jonah at Nineveh (1 Kings xix. 4; Jon. iv. 3, 8). God the arbiter of life and death. Job leaves his time in God's hand (ch. xiv. 14). Satan and Job's wife would have had him taking the matter into his own. Ancient heathens believed they had a right to end their life when they pleased. Desire for death a natural feeling under deep and protracted distress. Often, however, rather from the impatience of the flesh than the aspiration of the spirit. Only men's waywardness and hardness of heart once awakened something of the feeling in Jesus (Matt. xvii. 17). Paul's desire to depart was to be with Christ (Phil. i. 23). Desire for death no proof of fitness for it. The choice between life and death best referred to God Himself. *Preparation for death implies some ability to glorify God in life.* Soon enough to rest when our work is done. A favour to "cease at once to work and live." Job's request not granted. Some prayers better refused than answered. A sick child may be spared to die a felon's death.

The reason of Job's desire for death:—(1) *The comfort in the prospect of a speedy release from his extreme distress.* (Verse 10)—"Then should I yet have comfort (or, this should be my comfort); yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let Him not spare" (or, I would leap for joy in my unsparing sorrow). (2) *The consciousness of having been God's faithful servant:* "For I have not concealed (or denied) the words of the Holy One." Implies—(i.) Fearlessness in confessing the truth; (ii.) Faithfulness in communicating it. The sin of the heathen that of "holding or keeping down the truth in unrighteousness." Truth inwardly believed is to be outwardly professed (Rom. x. 10). God honoured and the world benefited by a bold and consistent profession of the truth. The practice of God's faithful servants in every age (Ps. lxxi. 17; cxix. 46). Examples: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Daniel. Truth received in order to be communicated (2 Cor. iv. 6; Phil. ii. 15, 16). The language of Job used by David and his great Antitype (Ps. xl. 9, 10). The testimony of a good and enlightened conscience a precious comfort in the midst of suffering and in the prospect of death (2 Cor. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 6—8). The testimony of Job's conscience, that he had neither by fearfulness nor faithlessness concealed

The Words of the Holy One.

These words found in the shape of—(1) Doctrines; (2) Promises; (3) Commands. They were *God's* words, as—(1) Communicated by Him to Adam and others, and handed down to their posterity; (2) Revealed to Job himself. "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers" (Heb. i. 1). The Church of God in possession of such words from the beginning. Faint echoes and distorted forms of these words found everywhere among the heathen. Prominent among these was the proto-evangel of Gen. iii. 15. These words the precious treasure of the children of God in every age. A light to their feet and a comfort to their heart Employed by Job in instructing, sustaining, and comforting others (ch. iv. 3, 4). God known in Job's time as "the Holy One." So called, Is. xl. 25; Hos. xi. 9; Hab. iii. 3. His name Holy (Is. lvii. 15). God alone holy (Rev. xv. 4). Peculiarly and essentially holy (1 Sam. ii. 2). Thrice holy (Is. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8). Contrasted with the gods of the heathen. These acknowledged by their very worshippers to be impure and unworthy of imitation. The Greeks and Romans justified their own impurity by that of their gods. People naturally resemble the deities they worship. Solemn obligation resting on the worshippers of the true God to be holy (Lev. xi. 44; 1 Pet. i. 16). His children made partakers of his holiness (Heb. xii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 4).

Job justifies his desire for death on the ground of his grievous affliction. His strength unable to hold out under such accumulated evils (verse 11). "What is my strength,"(—or power of endurance—)"that I should hope,"(—indulge the slow protracted hope of recovery and the enjoymont of those temporal blessings held out by Eliphaz)? "And what is mine end"(—the end of these miseries)—"that I should prolong my life?"(—or continue to exercise patience). The language of the flesh. Spoken according to *sense.* Justified by appearance and carnal reasoning. Despondency and impatience natural in the absence of faith. Faith battles with appearances and triumphs over them (Ps. xlii. 11; Mic. vii. 7, 8; Hab. iii. 17, 18). No time long to faith. Abraham's faith held out twenty-five years for the promised birth, till

his own and his wife's body were as good as dead. Faith the mother of patience. Looks not at the weakness of the creature, but the power of the Creator. Difficulties and apparent impossibilities the true matter for faith. "Laughs at impossibilities," because leaning on Omnipotence. Faith often to seek in a storm. "Every man is a believer in a fair day" [*Rutherford*]. No express promise of recovery and restoration given to Job. The fact of God's omnipotence, and the truth that He is the hearer of prayer, that He interposes sooner or later in his servants' behalf, and that He does all things well,—enough for faith to rest upon in time of trouble. Faith at times triumphant in Job, though not with reference to any temporal deliverance (ch. xix. 25, &c.; xxiii. 10). —Verse 12. "Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh of brass?"—the symbol of hardness and durability. The nature of unbelief to dwell in personal weakness. Faith looks not on human weakness but on Divine strength. Hence makes its possessor strong in his weakness. Through faith, believers "out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. xi. 34). Faith enabled Paul rather to glory in his infirmities, and to say: "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Job justifies his despondency on the ground of his thorough and apparently hopeless prostration (verse 13). "Is not my help in me? And is wisdom driven quite from me?" (Rather,—Is it not the fact that no help for me is in myself, and that recovery (or health) is quite fled from me?). Expresses his real case as viewed by the eye of sense. Abraham's faith, however, did not stagger even when the child of promise was to be offered on the altar. Our weakness and helplessness the proper theatre for the display of God's power and Christ's grace. Divine strength magnifies itself in realized weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9). A higher experience than that attained by Job reserved for God's children in the Gospel age (Heb. xi. 40; Matt. xi. 11). The feeble to be then like David, and the House of David as God (Zec. xii. 8; Is. xxx. 26).

III. Complains of his friends' want of sympathy (verses 14—21).

Kindness to the afflicted

1. *Job states a moral truth* (verse 14). "To him that is afflicted," &c.

Compassionate kindness to the suffering a dictate of humanity, and one of the first principles of religion (Jam. i. 27; Matt. ix. 13). The good Samaritan Christ's chosen example for His disciples, and His own commentary on the second table of the law. Mercy accompanied with truth the essence of moral perfection, and the true spirit of Christianity (Ps. lxxxv. 10; lxxxix. 14). Pity to be shown to the afflicted—(1) In words of sympathy and kindness; (2) In practical assistance, as far as in our power; (3) In refraining from what may unnecessarily wound the feelings; (4) In commending the sufferer's case to God (Ps. cxli. 5; Jam. v. 15, 16). This to be done for any in affliction, especially for a friend (Luke x 29—37; Prov. xvii. 17).

2. *Applies this truth to the case of his friends.* "But he forsaketh the fear," &c., —viz., Eliphaz and the others, in their want of kindness and sympathy towards Job. *Want of love to our neighbour proves want of love to God.* Love to our neighbour enjoined by Divine authority as the second part of the law. The want of it, therefore, an evidence of the want of *fear* as well as *love* towards God. Pity is love to our neighbour in *affliction*. Our neighbour has *always* a claim on our *love*, and *in affliction* on our *pity*. That pity engendered by the fear of God, as—(1) Our neighbour is God's own offspring; (2) Our suffering neighbour is the object of His special regard. Pity required by God towards a suffering neighbour as He has had pity on ourselves (Matt. xviii. 33—35). Mercy and compassion His own character, to be imitated by all His children (Luke vi. 36). The fear of God therefore the guarantee of right feelings towards man. The guardian of all the social and relative duties. Love to God unable to dwell in the same heart with indifference to man. Selfishness incompatible with the fear of God. After God's example, kindness and pity to be shown to the afflicted, whatever his character and religion. Illustrated by the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the legend of Abraham and the Idolater. As a motive to shew kindness to the poor and the afflicted, God has identified their cases with His own (Prov. xiv. 31; xix. 17). Pity due to an afflicted fellow-creature, still more to an afflicted friend. Duties and obligations enhanced according to relationship (Mal. i. 6; Prov. xvii. 17; xviii. 24).

The disappointing conduct of the friends touchingly set forth by a continued simile (verse 15, &c.). "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook," (or wady—a narrow valley or bed of a stream between two rocky hills, filled with water in winter but usually dried up in summer)—"as the stream of brooks they (or, which) pass away," viz. in the heat of summer. Three points in the comparison:—(1) *The former profession of friendship,*—resembling the noisy, rushing wady-stream, full of water through the melted ice, and snow, and rains of winter

when less required. (Verse 16).—(2) *The failure in real kindness and sympathy when needed*,—like the drying up of the brook through the summer heat, and the entire disappearance of the waters, having vanished into vapour or been lost in the sands of the desert. (Verse 17, 18).—(3) *The bitter disappointment*,—like that of the caravans of Tema or Ishmaelites, and the trading companies of Sheba or Arabia Felix, when, contrary to their expectation, they find the stream dried up, and are unable to obtain a supply of water (verse 19, 20). Observe—(1) *The right of the afflicted to expect kindness and sympathy, especially from their friends.* (2) *Care to be taken to make a visit of condolence to correspond with its profession.* (3) *A great part of friendship, to be true in time of trouble.* Affection not to be cooled by affliction. A brother born for adversity. False friends like vermin that abandon a sinking vessel, or swallows that depart at the approach of winter. True friends like ivy that adheres to the tree in its decay. Genuine friendship, like the light of phosphorus, brightest in the dark. (4) *Our views of a friend's character not to be lightly changed, least of all by his circumstances.* Base even to suspect a friend. Love "hopeth all things" and "thinketh no evil."

The ground of his complaint (verse 21). "For now ye are nothing,"—are to me like the vanished wady-stream, as though you had never been. Friends by profession to prove themselves worthy of the name. Base to profess friendship and to be destitute of its feelings, or to withhold its offices. Love to be not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John iii. 18).—"Ye have seen my casting down," (my prostration and calamity) "and are afraid." Their feelings read in their faces. Only *one* had spoken with his lips, *all* with their *looks*. Their fear as if a pious dread at the signal display of Divine judgment, and horror at the discovery of secret wickedness. Afraid—(1) Of being found sympathizing with a guilty man; (2) Of being involved in the same calamity; (3) Of being called upon to relieve or defend the sufferer. Base to withhold sympathy and kindness from regard to our own comfort, credit, or convenience.

IV. Remonstrates with his friends on the baseness of their conduct (verses 22—24).

1. *He had asked no favour at their hands* (verses 22, 23). "Did I say (or, is it because I said) Bring unto me (for my relief); or Give a reward for me of your substance (to repair my losses or obtain the favour of the judge); or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand? Or, redeem me from the hand of the mighty?"—(who have robbed me of my property, or are now adding to my affliction). The right of the afflicted and suffering to receive not only sympathy but practical help. Afforded by Abraham to his captive nephew (Gen. xiv. 14). This a noble mind recoils from asking, though thankful in receiving. The favour Job refused to ask, afterwards liberally accorded (ch. xlii. 11). *Sometimes the only service we can render is a cordial sympathy.*

2. *They had not attempted to show him his sin* (verse 24). "Teach me and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred." Mark of an honest and ingenuous mind to be willing to be convinced of error or wrong-doing. A prejudice or superstition simply to infer sinning from suffering. Absurd to exhort to repentance without attempting to convince of sin. Job's friends unable to point out any fault in his former life, except by inference. The language of his Antitype partially his—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John viii. 46). All sin an erring or straying from the path of rectitude and the will of God. Found in all, Job not excepted; his friends only challenged to point out any breach of morality or religion as the cause of his peculiar suffering. To point out sin when we see it, is a duty we owe to our neighbour. Faithful and wise reproof required by the law of love (Lev. xix. 17). *Job's sense of the value of such reproof* (verse 25)

Right Words.

"How forcible are right words!" (Heb. "words of uprightness").

1. The *form* of such words—(1) Argument; (2) Reproof; (3) Instruction; (4) Admonition; (5) Persuasion.

2. The *character* of the words—"right." (1) *Right and true in themselves*—unmixed with error and falsehood—"sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Tit. ii. 8). In speaking to others we are to beware of daubing with untempered mortar (Ezek. xiii. 10); or of corrupting the Word of God (2 Cor. ii. 17). To speak forth only "the words of truth and soberness" (Acts xxvi. 25); "acceptable words," but also "words of truth" (Eccles. xii. 10). Arguments to be sound,—premises true, and conclusions just. Our statements to be according to the law and the testimony (Is. viii. 20). (2) *The whole truth, so far as necessary, in connection with the subject.* Nothing profitable to be kept back, either from fear or favour. No mere one-sided view of the truth to be given. Teachers not to be partial in the law (Mal. ii. 9). Truth to be exhibited in all its parts, and in their due proportions. The word of truth to be rightly divided (2 Tim. ii. 15). The mercy of God not to be enlarged upon to the ignoring of

His justice, nor the converse. The promises not to be without the precepts, nor the precepts without the promises. Faith not to be urged without works as its fruits, nor works without faith as their foundation. Not morality without religion, nor religion without morality. Not the law without the Gospel, nor the Gospel without the law. Words, to be right words, must be evangelical words—"the truth as it is in Jesus." Pardon not to be held out apart from Christ's blood which procures it. Holiness not to be urged apart from Christ's indwelling spirit as its author. (3) *Correct in their application.* Truth may be so applied as to become practical error. The fault in Job's friends. Pillows not to be sewed to all armholes; and those not to be made sad, even with truth, whom the Lord does not make sad (Ezek. xiii. 18—22). Meat to be given in season as each requires and is able to bear it. Milk to babes, strong meat to those of mature age. Some to be sharply reproved. The bruised reed to be bound up with tender hand. Not only truth to be preached, but *seasonable* truth—"the present truth," (2 Pet. i. 12). Sound doctrine not to be so preached as to become a *soporific*. The words of the wise to be as *goads*, therefore to be wisely *directed*. "A word spoken in season, how good is it?" (4) *Spoken in uprightness and sincerity*. Without fear or favour. Without prejudice or passion. Without self-seeking or time-serving. With simplicity and godly sincerity. As in the sight of God and in the view of eternity. The speaker to *be*, and therefore to *appear*, in earnest. Truth not to be spoken as if it were fiction, as if not believed by the speaker himself. To be spoken in *love*, in tenderness, sympathy, and concern for the hearer's welfare. The speaker's *spirit* to preach as well as his *speech*, his *manner* as well as his *matter*. The words of truth on the speaker's lips not to be falsified by the manner in which they are spoken, or by the inconsistency of his life.

3. The *efficacy* of such words. "Forcible,"—powerful, efficacious. (1.) In *enlightening the understanding*, discovering truth, and so producing *faith*. "So spake that a great multitude believed." (Acts xiv. 1). A well-constructed argument having truth for its basis, irresistible [*A. Clarke*]. (2.) In *awakening the conscience*, convincing of sin, and so producing *repentance*. So Peter's words at Pentecost, and Paul's before Felix (Acts ii. 37; xxiv. 25). (3.) In *moving the affections* and will, and so restraining from sin, and persuading to *duty*. So with the awakened at Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). The Ephesians burned their ungodly books (Acts xix. 19). Herod heard John gladly and did many things (Mark vi. 20). (4.) In *comforting the afflicted*, sustaining the weak, and succouring the tempted. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop—a good word maketh it glad" (Prov. xii. 25). The effect of Job's own words in his former condition (chap. iv. 3, 4).

V. Complains of his friends' reproof and their conduct towards him (verses 25—27).

1. *Their argument and reproof had been pointless and profitless* (verse 25). "What doth your arguing reprove? (or, "what conviction is there in the reproof you have administered?") Eliphaz, their chief speaker, had (1) shewn no sin on the part of Job as meriting his severe treatment; (2) Exhorted to repentance without showing the grounds for its necessity. In discoursing to others we are to have a *clear aim and definite purpose*. That aim to be a *right one and important in the circumstances*. Our purpose to be prosecuted in a *wise and suitable manner*. The preacher not to speak "as uncertainly," nor to preach "as one that beateth the air."

2. *Their reproof was directed only against words uttered in deep distress and great disquietude of spirit* (verse 26). "Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?" (or, "and to scrutinize, sift, or 'air' the speeches of one that is desperate?") The fault of Job's friends that they had attacked the words of his complaint instead of showing the evil of his life. As a rule, by our words we shall be justified or condemned (Matt. xii. 37). The reason, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Ordinarily, a man is as his speech. Allowance, however, to be made for words uttered under deep distress, and in exceptionally trying circumstances. A high offence in God's sight to make a man an offender for a word (Is. xxix. 21). Observe—(1.) *Rash words, especially under provocation, an "easily besetting sin"* (Heb. xii. 1). Great temptation to such words under excited feeling. The heart to be kept with all diligence, especially in time of trouble (Prov. iv. 23). The mouth to be kept as with a bridle when God's hand is heavy on us (Ps. xxxix. 1—10). (2.) The *case of a believer may appear "desperate" to himself and others, when it appears the very opposite to God.* A child of God often writes bitter things against himself when his Father does not. A tried believer apt to judge of his case from feeling and appearance. The flesh a blind judge as to a man's real case and character. That case can never be desperate which is linked to the Almighty's throne. "Thou hast nothing to fear who hast Cæsar for thy friend." A man's case cannot be desperate who has—

(i) a place in the Almighty's heart; (ii) his hand in His heavenly Father's; (iii) an interest in the everlasting covenant (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

Job strongly inveighs against his friend's conduct (verse 27). "Yea, ye overwhelm (*margin*, 'cause [a net or noose] to fall upon') the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend" (seeking to catch him in ungarded words, and to make him out to be a hypocrite and transgressor). Rightly or wrongly, Job construes his friends' language and looks into *malice*. Their conduct harsh and unfeeling, but according to Job, diabolical. Strong language and exaggerated views of the conduct of others towards ourselves, a natural result of deep trouble and excited feeling. Men capable, however, of the conduct here ascribed by Job to his friends. Joseph's brethren an example. The words strictly true of the enemies of Jesus, their truest and best friend. The conduct of Job's friends all the guiltier as being—(1) Under colour of friendship; (2) Under profession of piety; (3) With considerable knowledge of Divine truth. *Cruellest feelings sometimes covered with the garb of greatest sanctity.* Example: Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisitors. Important prayer—"Search me, O God, and know my heart" &c. (Ps. cxxxix. 23).

VI. Job's challenge to his friends (verses 28—30).

1. *Appeal of conscious integrity* (verse 28). "Now, therefore, be content, look upon me; for it is evident unto you (*margin*, 'it is before your face') if I lie" (or, "shall I lie to your face?") Observe:—(1) *Conscious innocence not only allows but solicits examination.* A good conscience enables a man to live in a glass-house. So Jesus—"Which of you convinceth me of sin" (John viii. 46). A mark of grace to come to the light that our deeds may be made manifest (John iii. 21). Paul prays for believers that they may be "sincere," able, in heart and life, to bear the scrutiny of daylight (Phil. i. 10). A child of God is careful to be truthful both in lip and life. A Christian is one who is more concerned to *be* than to *appear* such. (2) *Truth and sincerity read in the countenance.* The face the dial-plate of the soul. *An upright heart makes an open countenance* (verse 29). "Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity (or, 'let there no injustice'—no unjust or partial judgment); yea, return again, my righteousness is in it" (*margin*, "in this matter"—I shall be found innocent in the trial). *Truth and innocence court investigation.* The consciously upright desire only impartial and unprejudiced trial. The language of Jesus, and of those wrapped in His righteousness—"Who is he that condemneth" (Isa. l. 9; Rom. viii. 32—34). The believer a paradox—"Black but comely"—black in himself, comely in Christ; guilty and yet righteous—guilty in his own person, righteous in his righteous Head (2 Cor. v. 21). *Renounces all righteousness but Christ's in the sight of God, yet careful to maintain a spotless character in the sight of men.*

2. *The ground of Job's appeal*—his ability to distinguish and judge of moral conduct (verse 30). "Is there iniquity (literally, or, a depraved taste) in my tongue? Cannot my taste (*margin*, 'palate') discern perverse things?" (am I not able to distinguish between right and wrong?) *No small excellence to possess a correct moral judgment.* Moral sense obscured and weakened by the fall and by a course of sin. The moral judgment becomes depraved by sin as the taste by disease. The character of the ungodly to call evil good, and good evil. The mature Christian, one who has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. v. 14). A fruit of renewing grace to know and approve "the good, the perfect, and the acceptable" (Rom. xii. 2). "Judgment" to "approve things that are excellent," or to "distinguish between things that differ," a gift of grace (Phil. i. 9, 10). A part of spiritual wisdom to understand what the will of the Lord is, and the opposite (Eph. v. 17). *Grace indicated not only by a tender, but an enlightened conscience.* The ungodly know not what at they stumble. "They know not what they do." In murdering Christ's followers, men were to think they were doing God service (John xvi. 2). Paul's former case (Acts xxvi. 9—11). Important prayer—"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk" (Ps. cxliii. 8).

CHAPTER VII.

CONTINUATION OF JOB'S SPEECH.

Job ceases to altercate with Eliphaz and to defend himself. Resumes his complaints, and ends by addressing himself to God.

I. Complains of the general lot of humanity (verse 1).

"Is there not an appointed time (*margin*, 'a warfare,' or *war-service*) to man (properly, to *wretched* man, *Heb.*, 'Enosh,'—man viewed as fallen, and therefore miserable) upon earth? Are not his days also as the days of an hireling?" Wishes to show—

(1) His desire for death excusable; (2) Suffering not peculiar to the bad. Suggests instructive views of

Human Life.

1. *As an appointed period.* War-service, and the time of a hired labourer's employment, *limited.* The term used also to express the time of a Levite's service at the tabernacle, namely, twenty years (Numb. iv. 23). Doctrine: *The bounds of man's life appointed* (ch. xiv. 5). Our days measured out by Him who created us (Psa. xxxix. 4). Our times in His hand (Psa. xxxi. 15). Not without respect to the means necessary for life's continuance. God's predestination neither interferes with *the human will* nor the *operation of second causes*, but embraces both. The means taken into view along with the appointment of the *end*. The crop not appointed without the ploughing and sowing. If the passengers' lives are to be preserved, the sailors are to do their duty (Acts xxvii. 22—31). The elect saved, but not without regeneration, repentance, and faith. If a man is to reach his "threescore years and ten," he is not to shorten them by neglect, intemperance, or crime. The wicked often do not "live out half their days,"—the days they *might* and *should* have lived. Disease as much appointed as the death it occasions. Lessons: Life an *appointed period.* Hence—(1.) *Bear meekly its trials*; they are but for a limited time; (2.) *Wait patiently for its termination:* it will come in God's time. Neither greatly desire nor hasten it; (3.) *Carefully improve its continuance.* Much to be done, and but a short time to do it in (Eccles. ix. 10).

2. *As a war-service.* Such a period not one of ease, enjoyment, or indulgence; but of hardship, privation, unrest. Job's reason for desiring its termination. Life a war-service—(1) As a time of *trouble and suffering.* Man born to trouble (ch. v. 7); (2) As a time of *conflict.* Sin and Satan our great enemies; (3) As a time of *service.* Man bound to serve God as his rightful sovereign. Lessons: (1) Be *patient of hardship*, and *prepared for trial* and *suffering.* Man's, and especially a Christian's, is a *soldier's* life. "Endure hardness" (2 Tim. ii. 3). Tedious marches, camp discomforts, field duties. (2) Be *careful to be on the right side.* We *must* serve; but it may be either under Christ's banner or the devil's. (3) Be *faithful, obedient, and active;* faithful to your King, obedient to your Captain, active in discharge of your duty. (4) Be *hopeful, courageous, and enduring.* With Christ as our captain victory is certain; and, after short and faithful service, comes long and honourable reward (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

3. As *the term of a hired servant.* We may have a hireling's *post*, without a hireling's *spirit.* Salvation by grace not inconsistent with "respect to the recompense of reward." Each believer has his work in the vineyard, and each receives "his penny." A hired labourer has—(1) *Painful and self-denying labour* to undergo; (2) A *short and limited time* to do it in; (3) *Due wages* to receive when it is done. Life such a service. Man *must* serve—either God or Satan, righteousness or sin (Rom. vi. 16—22). Each thought, word, and action, a service to one or other of these two masters. Hence—(1) "*Choose the best master.* God's service is—(i.) Honourable; (ii.) Pleasant; (iii.) Satisfying to the conscience. Has along with it—(*a*) Kind treatment; (*b*) Comfortable provision; (*c*) Liberal remuneration.—(2) *Be diligent in doing the Master's work* and *watchful in looking for the Master's coming* (Mark xiii. 34—37.)

II. Renews his complaint and describes his sad condition. Mention of the "hireling" in verse 1 suggests to him the comparison of himself to a slave or a day-labourer who longs for the evening rest (verse 2). "As the servant (or slave) earnestly desireth (*margin*—'gapeth' or pants after) the shadow [of evening], and as a hireling (hired servant, as distinguished from a slave) looketh for the reward (or finishing) of his work, so," &c.

Describes his afflicted condition in three particulars:—

1. *Comfortless days and painful nights* (verse 3). "So am I made to possess (*Heb.* 'to inherit') months of vanity (without comfort or relief to myself, and without profit either to myself, or others), and wearisome nights (*Heb.* 'nights of labour or trouble') are appointed (*Heb.* 'numbered') to me." Such days and nights the result—(1) Of his disease; (2) Of his bereavement; (3) Of spiritual darkness. Says not *days*, but "months" of vanity, each day appearing a month. So Jonah speaks of his three days in the fish's belly as an eternity,—"for ever" (Jon. ii. 6). "A man in great misery may so far lose his measure as to think a minute an hour" [*Locke*]. On the other hand, as grief *retards*, so joy *hastens* time. The bliss of heaven makes "eternity seem as a day." Job's troubles, however, may now have probably lasted some months. These painful days and nights spoken of as an *inheritance.* A bitter irony, yet true. Trouble handed down to us with sin as its consequence. "A sad inheritance of woe." Adheres to us as our ancestral possession. "*Made* to possess" them, as against his will. The creature made sub-

ject to vanity, not willingly" (Rom. viii. 20). Blessed contrast to this inheritance is that found in Christ (Rom. viii. 17; Heb. ix. 15; 1 Pet. i. 4). Yet months of suffering not necessarily "months of vanity." These, to a child of God, among the all things working together for his good (Rom. viii. 28). Times of affliction are made times of profit, to *ourselves*, through spiritual teaching and Divine communion; to *others*, by the example afforded of patience and Divine support.

"In all my list of blessings infinite
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled."

2. *Restlessness of mind and body* (verse 4). "When I lie down, I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? (or, 'but the night is extended;' *margin*, 'and the evening be measured?') And I am full of tossings," &c. The distressing *nights* dwelt upon rather than the days. Long, weary, sleepless nights among the most painful circumstances connected with sickness or sorrow. Such nights contrasted with the refreshing rest of the worn-out slave and weary labourer. These wearisome and restless nights, however, *counted out* by God to his people. (verse 3). Not one too many, or more than He will over-rule for our good. *God an accurate dispenser of His people's sufferings and sorrow* (Is. xxvii. 8). Connected with the long sleepless nights are the "tossings to and fro upon the bed." "We change the place, but keep the pain." The nocturnal tossings in *mind* often more painful than those of the *body* (Ps. lxxvii. 2—9; Is. xxxviii. 13). Sleep God's gift to his beloved (Ps. cxxvii. 2). Its absence in sickness or trouble itself no small affliction.

"Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down?"

3. *Loathsomeness of body* (verse 5). "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust (literally, or in appearance); my skin is broken and become loathsome;" (or, breaks [in ulcers] and dissolves [in matter]). Corruption breeding worms, ulcerous running sores, and rough ashy scales covering the body, prominent features in Job's disease. The Elephantiasis a species of leprosy (Lev. xiii. 9—17). Renders the patient loathsome to look at, and forbids contact or near approach. Similar revolting picture probably presented in Lazarus (Luke xvi. 20), and in Herod (Acts xii. 23). Something like it complained of by David (Ps. xxxviii. 3, 5, 7, 11), and by Heman (Ps. lxxxviii. 8, 18). A sad aggravation of our affliction when it renders us loathsome to our friends.

Lessons from Job's Disease.

(1) *Terrible power of Satan.* Satan the immediate author of Job's disease. (2) *Dreadful effects of sin.* But for sin there had been no disease. Sin turns our comeliness into corruption, and covers a formerly fair and healthy body with foul putridity and worm-breeding sores. (3) *Character of our mortal body.* Soon reduced to loathsome putrefaction even while alive. "Our vile body,"—the "body of our humiliation" (Phil. iii. 21). (4) The *saint as liable to the most loathsome diseases as the sinner.* Witness Job and Lazarus. (5.) The *love of Christ in assuming a body with such liabilities.* Made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). "Took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17, quoted from Is. liii. 4). From the same prophecy, the Messiah said by the Jews to have his place among the lepers. (6.) *Preciousness of a glorious resurrection.* Our vile body changed and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body (Phil. iii. 21.) (7.) *Affecting picture of the loathsomeness of sin.* Leprosy the most loathsome of all bodily diseases. Sin symbolized by it as the most loathsome thing in the universe. The only truly loathsome thing in the eyes of God and holy beings. Makes the soul infinitely more loathsome than Job's disease did his body. The godless rich man loathsome with his plump, well-fed, and richly-clad body; godly Lazarus beautiful and comely in his sores.

4. *The prematureness of his anticipated death* (verse 6). "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle (or, 'come more quickly to an end than the weaving of a web'), and are spent without hope," (viz., of extension or relief; or, 'are finished for want of thread') so Is. xxxviii. 12. Job anticipated death as the certain and not distant result of his affliction (ch. ix. 25, 26; xvii. 11). Himself, as life was *then*, still comparatively young. Probably not more than seventy,—only a third of the age then usually attained and actually attained by himself (ch. xlii. 16). A premature death, especially in Old Testament times, viewed as a grievous calamity (Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; Is. xxxviii. 10—19. The language suggestive in regard to

Time.

1. *Its rapid flight and short duration.* Set forth in Scripture under various comparisons:—a flower, a vapour, a dream, a watch of the night, a tale that has been told, &c

Here, either a *weaver's shuttle* passing quickly to and fro, or a *web*, speedily and perhaps suddenly finished from want of thread. Time represented by the ancients with *wings*, as not running but *flying*. Jacob speaks of his days as few at the age of 130. The longest life only a speck in comparison with eternity. A northern winter's day, when the sun has scarcely risen before it sets again. The sun of many sets while it is yet noon. Job, like most others, had counted on a long life (ch. xxix. 18). Now the grave seems to open its mouth for him (ch. xvii. 1). "Though death be before the old man's face, it may be behind the young man's back" [*Seneca.*] Hence the *vanity of earthly pleasures and enjoyments*. Like Jonah's gourd, these spring up in a night and perish in a night. But "for a season," and that a very short one. Earthly pleasures are, according to one who deeply plunged into them,—

"Like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white, then melt for ever
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm."

2. *The value of time.* Time the short sea time for eternity. Bound up with eternal destinies. Its value seldom realised. No note taken of it but as the clock tells of its departure. Men speak of *killing* time. To destroy time is "suicide, where more than blood is spilt." Greater folly to throw away hours than empires. The value of time realised on a dying bed. "Millions of money for an inch of time" [*Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed*]. Time ceases at death, and gives place to eternity. "No clock strikes in hell, to say, Thank God, another hour is past. One gigantic clock there, without a dial-plate; its pendulum eternally vibrating, Ever, Never; Damnation ever, Redemption never" [*Krummacher*].

3. *The danger of delay in securing the soul's salvation.* Madness to put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day. "Serious things to-morrow"—cost both Cæsar and Archias their life. Procrastination the death of souls. Men "resolve and re-resolve, and die the same." Augustine was kept seven years from closing with Christ by the temptation, Time enough yet. When Hannibal *could* have taken Rome, he *would* not, and when he *would*, he *could* not. "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." The soul's salvation the one thing needful. Sad to be sowing our seed when we should be reaping our harvest [*Brooks*]. Cæsar Borgia on his deathbed said: While I lived, I provided for everything but death, and now death comes and I am unprovided for it. A promise made *to* late repentance. . . . no promise *of* late repentance.

"Alas, that men should lightly spend
In godless mirth or prayerless toil unblest,
Their brief inestimable day of proof,
Till the last golden sands run out."

IV. Job turns imploringly to God (verse 7).

"O remember," &c. *Better is trouble to cry to God than to complain to man.* God sometimes appears to His suffering people to *forget* them and their case (Ps. xiii. 1; xliv. 24; Is. xlix. 14). The contrary affirmed by God for their comfort (Is. xlix. 15). Job pleads for mitigation of His sufferings on the ground—(1) Of the *frail and fleeting nature of his earthly life.* "My life is wind"—a breath or puff of air; a "cloud" or smoke, unsubstantial and evanescent (Ps. lxxviii. 39; (2) Its *speedy termination* (verse 8). "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not." Speaks of himself as already dead or soon to be,—a living corpse. (*a*) *Life terminated by a look from the Almighty.* His glance our death. So those sent to apprehend Jesus fell backward to the ground at his mere look; (*b*) *Life, compared with God's eternity, only a moment*—the glance or twinkling of an eye. (3) The *impossibility of its recall* (verse 9, 10). "He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." The emitted breath, the cloud or smoke disappearing from the sky, never more to be recalled Death, "the bourne from which no traveller returns." *Only one life on earth.* A few special exceptions to prove the rule. Men die but once. *Solemn responsibility connected with our one life.* No second to correct the errors, undo the mischief, or make up for the negligence, of the first. An egress from the grave in reserve for each, but no return to a mortal life. A resurrection to come, both of the just and the unjust. That resurrection, however, not in the course of nature, but by the special command and power of God (John v. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 16). Christ Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Resurrection committed to His hands (John xi. 25; vi. 54). Resurrection not unknown to the patriarchs, but seldom referred to by Job. Enoch's translation a testimony to the early ages of the existence of the body in an invisible state. His prophecy a distinct revelation of resurrection (Jude 14, 15). God's relation to the godly dead as their God, a guarantee both of the separate existence of their spirits and the future resurrection of their bodies (Matt. xxii 31, 32). The doctrine of the resurrection, as well as of the state after death, one of gradual development. Job's age the twilight of revelation.

V. Job's resolution to give way to complaint. Occasioned by the considera... of his misery in the world and his

anticipated speedy, untimely, and irrevocable departure out of it (verse 11). "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth," &c. Falls again into his former temptation. His spirit like a surging sea, quiet for a little, then heaving again its angry billows. His present resolution the worst thing he could do. Tended to a continually increasing strife with God. Satan doubtless now rejoiced in his apparent advantage. So far his scheme likely to succeed. Probably thought the next thing would be that Job would "curse God to his face." Job preserved from this only by imparted and indwelling grace. *Perilous to advance so near the brink of the precipice.* Dangerous to indulge in bitter language in reference to our lot. Safest when *God's* hand is on our *back*, to keep *our* hand on our *mouth*. David's resolution in similar circumstances much wiser than Job's (Ps. xxxix. 1). *Free utterance to excited feelings only adds fuel to the fire.* Grace shutting the lips raises up a barrier to the tempest of the spirit. Passion acquires strength by indulgence and free expression. "Anguish of spirit" a very unsafe guide to speech. *Only turbid streams likely to flow from a turbid fountain.*

The result of Job's resolution, *petulant and unbecoming expostulation with God.* (Verse 12). "Am I a sea (or a desolating inundation, as of the Nile), or a whale (or sea-monster, as the crocodile), that Thou settest a watch over me (to restrain me by these terrible sufferings from doing injury)?" Very erroneous thoughts often suggested in trouble as to God's motive in sending it. We may sympathize with Job's sufferings without imitating his language. His language, however, indicates—(1) A believer readily ascribing all in his lot to God; (2) A soul moving always in the Divine presence; (3) The frequent and familiar intercourse of a child of God with his heavenly Father.

VI. Enlarges farther on his affliction (verses 13, 14).

1. *His distressing nights* (verse 13). "When I say, My bed shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me with visions" (images presented to the imagination while half-sleeping, half-waking). These probably a natural symptom of Job's disease. A grievous aggravation of the affliction. Night, the period of rest to others, made more distressing than the day. The blessing of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," seldom duly appreciated and acknowledged. Our minds accessible to Satan as well as God and good angels during sleep. Dreams either natural or supernatural; as supernatural, either diabolical or Divine. Job, in ignorance, ascribes to God what was properly due to Satan. Satan cruelly skilful in adopting suitable means to accomplish his purpose His object to exhaust the energies of Job's body and spirit, and by representing God as his enemy, to bring him to despair and to curse or renounce Him. For this, he employs a filthy disease and frightful dreams, and tempts him to believe them both from God. Satan a merciless tormentor. Possesses a terrible power of inflicting pain. Job's case a picture of the misery of falling into Satan's hands. Still more fearful to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. x. 31). God able to make every organ of the body and every faculty of the mind the seat of intolerable suffering.—Earnest desire for death the effect of these sufferings on the mind of Job (verse 15). "So that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life" (*margin*, "than my bones,"—all that is left of me). The "soul," or mere fleshly nature, may choose death as a release from suffering; the "spirit" or renewed nature says—"Not my will but thine be done;" "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," &c. (ch. xiv. 14). *Grace the truest heroism.* Brave in the battle-field, a man may yet fly in the battle of life. *Suicide at best but moral cowardice.* To be only accounted for by the *absence* or the *eclipse* of faith. *Faith in God alone gives true courage.* The strongest mind weak when left to itself under depressing thoughts or a disturbed brain. "Do thyself no harm," a timely voice to harassed and despairing souls.

2. *The extremely reduced state of his body and the certainty of a speedy death* (verse 16). "I loathe it (*i.e.*, my life; or, 'I am wasting away'); I would not (or, 'I shall not') live always (*i.e.*, I shall soon die at any rate); let me alone (leave me to die, or cease to harass me with bodily and mental suffering), for my days are vanity" [and will soon come to an end]. Job's spirit tossed between two desires—either an immediate death as a release from his continued misery, or a relief from suffering for the few days that remained to him. The troubled and agitated spirit seldom long in one stay.

VII. Man's insignificance urged by Job as a plea for deliverance or relief (verse 17).

"What is man (*Heb.*, 'wretched man,' *enosh*) that thou," &c. Same question asked by David from an entirely different consideration (Ps. viii. 4). The same truth often viewed in different aspects and with different feelings by different persons, and by the same person at different times. The truth, dark to one or at one time, is bright to another or to the same person at another time *Truth,*

like the cloud that followed Israel, presents both a dark side and a bright one. Happy, like Israel, to be on the *bright* side. God's great attention to man produced in David *admiration and praise;* in Job *displeasure and complaint.* To the Psalmist God appears amiable as a Father delighting in blessing His children; to the Patriarch, stern as a judge, constantly examining into men's actions. Faith's office is to view the truth *as it is,* apart from personal feeling. *Feeling,* in Job, asks with *petulance*—"Why doth He visit men every morning?" *Faith,* in Jeremiah, exclaims with *thankfulness,* amid the desolations of a sacked and burned city—"His mercies are new every morning" (Lam. iii. 23). God's morning visitation a *mercy,* and should—(1) Impart *comfort;* (2) Awaken *praise.* Opens our eyes to the grateful light of day, the beauties of nature, and the faces of relatives and friends. Imparts to us health of body, soundness of mind, comfort of spirit. Continues to us day after day food, raiment, home, society of friends. Invites us every morning afresh to communion with Himself as our Father in Christ.

Important and suggestive question,

What is Man?

At once the least and the greatest of God's creatures. Lower than the angels in creature-position, immensely higher in Redemption-privilege. Lives one life on earth consisting of a few months or years; a second in another sphere, which shall last for ever. Has a body that allies him to the ground on which he walks; and a spirit that connects him to the God that made him. A reed, but a reed that thinks [*Pascal*]. A worm, but a worm capable of measuring the distances of the stars and of grasping the universe. Made in the image of his Creator as to moral nature, intelligence, immortality, and dominion. Through disobedience and rebellion, reduced below the level of the brutes. Mercifully provided with deliverance from his fallen condition through the substituted obedience and death of his incarnate Creator.—Man "magnified" by God,

1. In *Creation;* his place above all the creatures around him, and second only to that of the angels that surround the Eternal's throne.

2. In *Providence;* the attention originally paid to his comfort, and the care continually exercised over him.

3. In *Redemption;* the highest possible proof of Divine regard afforded in the life, sufferings, and death of God's own Son for his deliverance and happiness.

4. In his *Glorification;* united to the Son of God and made like Him in spirit, soul, and body; exalted as His spouse to sit with Him on His throne, and with Him to judge angels.

5. In the *Assumption of his nature by the Son of God.* Christ *the* man, the second Adam and Head of the race. In Christ man's nature taken into mysterious, intimate, and indissoluble union with the Divine. Man exalted in Christ to the throne of the universe.

VIII. Conclusion of Job's speech (verses 19—21). Contains—

1. *A peevish prayer* (verse 19) "How long wilt thou not depart (*Heb.*, 'look away') from me? nor let me alone that I may swallow down my spittle" (even for the shortest period)? Prayers in time of trial are sometimes—(1) Ignorant; (2) Injurious; (3) Requiring repentance. The flesh incapable of judging aright of God and His dealings. God viewed by Job as an adversary intent only on overthrowing him. Yet His removal, or the withdrawing of His eyes from us, our certain ruin. The same spirit moved the Gadarenes to beseech Christ to depart out of their coasts. Prayer often unanswered in compassion to the offerer. Grace needed to know what to pray for (Luke xi. 1). The Holy Spirit's office (Rom. viii. 26).

2. *A partial confession* (verse 20). "I have sinned; what shall I do (or, 'What have I [thereby] done') unto thee?" A confession, but neither frank nor free. Made rather hypothetically,—"granting I have sinned," or, "If I have." Job's conscience not yet sufficiently enlightened nor his soul sufficiently subdued to make the Publican's confession. The confession rather extorted by the fact of suffering than the consciousness of sin. Job free from life sins; heart sins not yet sufficiently discovered to him. This discovery and his consequent humble confession not made till Jehovah has revealed Himself (ch. xl. 4; xlii. 5, 6). Compare Is. vi. 5; Luke v. 8.—In order to be acceptable,

Confession of Sin

must be—(1) *Free;* spontaneous, unconstrained; not extorted by suffering, or merely in order to deliverance from it, as in the case of Pharaoh (Ex. ix. 27; x. 16); (2.) *Frank;* open and sincere; without guile or desire of concealment (Ps. xxxii. 2, 5); (3.) *Full;* thorough and without reservation (Josh. vii. 19—21); (4.) *Particular;* not merely of sin in general, or as common to the race; "I have sinned and done *this* evil in thy sight" (Ps. li. 4; (5.) *Serious and heartfelt;* with sense of the heinousness and demerit of the sin confessed

(Ps. li. 8; Luke xviii. 13). In true confession the heart is both *affected with* the sin, and *engaged against* it. Confession of sin needful in the holiest saint. Sin cleaves to the believer as ivy to the wall. The strongest believer not above the *actings* of sin, the weakest not under the *power* of it. The more we realize God's *spotlessness*, the more we discern our own *spots*. Sweet to confess sin in sight of the laver of a Saviour's blood. Confession of sin with the lips enhances the preciousness of Christ in the heart. *Concealed* sin grows—(1) In *strength*; (2) In *guilt*; (3) In *terror* (Ps. xxxii. 3, 4). Job's confession, such as it was, one rather of the *mere fact of sin*. Acknowledges no *evil* connected with it, or *demerit* attached to it. Its heinousness and malignity as *against God*, yet to be discovered. "What have I done unto thee?" The idea: What wrong have I done thee by my sin, that thou shouldst thus treat me as thine enemy? Sin to be viewed as an injury, not merely to our neighbour or ourselves, but more especially *against God*.

Sin

Is injury done to God, as—

(1.) *It robs Him of the honour due to Him* (Mal. i. 6). Man's sin may not take from God's *happiness*, but it takes from God's *honour*. Every sin strikes as truly at God's honour as at our peace. (2.) *It tramples under foot His authority*. Says with Pharaoh: "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" (Ex. v. 2). (3.) *It breaks His laws*. (4.) *It disturbs the harmony and happiness of His universe*. (5.) *It introduces disorder into His government*, and, if not arrested and punished, would bring it to an end. (6.) *It interrupts and would terminate His enjoyment of His own works* (Gen. i. 31; Ps. civ. 24). (7.) *It obliterates His image in His intelligent creatures, and substitutes that of His adversary*. Treasonably effaces His image and superscription from His own coin.

Job, in his confession, petulantly addresses God as the watcher and observer of His creatures—"Oh, thou preserver of men." Same word denotes "guardian" and "observer" (chap. xxvii. 18). Latter sense here favoured by the context (so chap. xiv. 16). God viewed as if carefully marking men's faults in order to punish them. *Only perverted and dishonouring views of God taken by the flesh, especially under trouble*. Satan's aim to foster such views in Job in order to gain his object. Job's complaint in keeping with this view. "Why hast Thou set me as a mark against Thee?" (to shoot at, or make an attack upon). The supposed result of God's close inspection of his conduct, and as in revenge for the injury done to him. Already viewed himself as shot at by the Almighty's arrows (chapter vi 4). Speaks according to sense and appearance. *God's choicest saints often appear to be the butt of his sharpest arrows*.—The effect and meaning of these arrows; "So that I am a burden to myself" or, "and I am become a burden to thee" (both readings found, the latter probably the true one). The sinner, a burden to *God* through his *sin*, and a burden to *himself* through his *suffering*. When sin makes a man a burden to God, he is likely to become a burden to himself. A sinner left to himself the greatest burden that can be laid upon him. Suffering often a heavy burden; sin a thousand times more so. "I had rather go into hell without sin, than into heaven with it" [*Luther*]. Cain said, my *punishment* is greater than I can bear: the same word generally rendered "iniquity," as in verse 20. Judas thought to throw off the burden by hanging himself, but only made it faster and heavier. *Sin makes men a burden to the Creator as well as to themselves*. God wearied with men's iniquities (Is. xliii. 24). Pressed under them as a cart full of sheaves (Am. ii. 13). That Job was a burden to *himself* was *his own feeling*; that he was a burden to *God*, was *Satan's suggestion*.

3. A *passionate question and a plaintive appeal* (verse 21). "And why dost thou not pardon (*Heb.* 'take away' or remit, as a debt) my transgression, and take away (*Heb.* 'cause to pass away' as a cloud) mine iniquity?" "Transgression" and "iniquity" embrace all kinds of sin, those of commission and omission, presumption and ignorance, life and heart. The question not that of a humble penitent asking forgiveness. Job yet to be made a poor sinner. Pardon of sin a favour, not an *obligation*, or *matter of course*.

Pardon of Sin.

Often, as here, desired rather as the removal of *suffering* than of *guilt*. Only not *bestowed*, because the sinner is not prepared to *receive* it. Pride, impenitence, and unbelief shut out forgiveness as the window-shutters exclude the sun. Pardon only vouchsafed—(1) When sin is realised and sincerely confessed (1 John i. 9; Ps. xxxii. 5; Ps. xxviii. 13); (2) When its demerit and hell-deservingness is acknowledged (Ps. li. 4, 11); (3) When deliverance is desired from its practice and power as well as from its punishment (Ps. li. 10); (4) When pardon is humbly sought as a matter of pure mercy (Ps. li. 1; Luke xviii. 13); (5) When it is accepted as only bestowed in virtue of the suffering and death of God's Son as the sinner's

Substitute (Heb. ix. 15, 22, 28; 1 John i. 7, 9; ii. 1, 2; Rom. iii. 24—26).

The reason of Job's passionate question the prospect of a speedy death. "For now shall I sleep in the dust." Idea: I shall soon die, and Thou must either pardon and heal me speedily or not at all. Death to the believer a *sleep*. The thought of it not unpleasant to Job. A blessed awaking the hope of the Church (Ps. xvii. 15; Is. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 14—16). Job's hope (ch. xiv. 12—15; xix. 25—27). *He can calmly lay his head in the dust, whose heart is already in heaven.*—Job believes in a time of Divine relenting towards him. "Thou shalt seek me in the morning (*i.e.*, diligently), but I shall not be"—(thy desire to do me good will be too late). The picture that of a father relenting towards a suffering child. Exhibited also in Jer. xxxi. 18—20; Is. liv. 6—10. *God's love to His people unchanging and everlasting* (Jer. xxxi. 3; John xiii. 1). His *dealings with* them may change, but not his *delight in* them. The believer, however tried, still unwilling to quit his hold of God's fatherly relationship. Faith says, "Though His *hand* be *against* me, His *heart* is still *towards* me." Job's comfort too at times (ch. xiii. 15, 16; xiv. 15; xix. 25—27; xxiii. 10).

CHAPTER VIII.

BILDAD'S FIRST SPEECH.

Bildad less courteous and considerate of Job's feelings than even Eliphaz. Commences with an unfeeling reflection on his speech. Pursues the same line of argument and address as his predecessor—(1) God is righteous—punishing the bad, and rewarding those who seek and serve Him; (2) Job exhorted to prove the latter by sincere repentance and prayer; (3) The prosperity of the wicked short-lived, and sure to end in ruin: the end of the righteous certain joy and triumph.

I. Bildad's Introduction (verse 2).

A harsh censure on Job's speech—(1) For its *length*. "*How long* wilt thou speak," &c. Had listened to Job with impatience. Due to every man to hear him patiently, especially a man in affliction; (2) For its *matter*. "How long wilt thou speak *these things?*" Uttered with contempt—these worthless and wicked sentiments; (3) For its *vehemence*. "And the words of thy mouth be like a *strong wind*"—recklessly bearing down all before thee, human and Divine. Intensely unfeeling thus to attack the words of a man in such deep distress. *Faultiness* in *another's* speech no excuse for *unfeelingness* in our *own*. Job's speech not more destitute of *sobriety* than Bildad's is of *sympathy*. Difficult even under the Gospel to have our "speech always with grace, seasoned with salt." Christians so to speak as to "minister grace to the hearer," and bring glory to God. Bildad's censure not without use to preachers. Suggests care as to—(1) The *length*; (2) The *matter*; (3) The *manner* of their discourses. Preachers to avoid—(1) Prolixity; (2) Unsound or unprofitable matter; (3) A vehement and boisterous delivery.

II. Bildad strongly asserts the Divine righteousness (verse 3).

"Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" This apparently implied in Job's complaints. God essentially righteous. Incapable of injustice towards His creatures. As "the Almighty," He is beyond any temptation to act unjustly. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right (Gen. xviii. 25). Severe complaints like Job's, a reflection on God's justice. God is righteous

1. *In punishing sin.* The reference in Bildad's mind both to Job's affliction and his children's death. Cruelly treats the latter as a probable, if not certain, instance of Divine justice (verse 4).—"If (or, 'since') thy children have sinned against Him, and He have cast them away for (*margin*, 'in the hand of') their transgression," making their sin in immoderate feasting to be its own punishment, &c. An erroneous as well as unfeeling application of the general truth. (1) Job's children had sinned, but not above all men that dwelt in the land of Uz; (2) Their sin was not the occasion of their death. No injustice on God's part, however, either to Job or his children, in allowing the calamity. Sufficient sin in each to merit more than any earthly affliction (Lam. iii. 39). Death, in the case of believers' children, their removal to a better state. To the parents, overruled for their elevation to a higher spiritual life. *Bildad's error in regarding earth as the sphere of God's retributive justice.* General tendency to view calamity as the righteous punishment of sinful conduct. The tower in Siloam. The error reproved by Jesus (Luke xiii. 1—5). The unjust reserved to the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter ii. 9). The present

life rather the time of forbearance and mercy (2 Peter iii. 9, 15). Many apparent anomalies in the Divine procedure. Examples: Abel's murder, and Cain's long and prosperous life. A future state necessary to clear up these anomalies, and fully display the righteousness of God.

2. *In rewarding those who seek and serve Him* (verse 5).—"If thou" (emphatic, thou who art still spared) "wouldst seek unto God betimes (repair to Him earnestly and at once), and make, &c., if thou wert pure [in thy heart and motive] and upright [in thy profession and practice while so doing]; surely now [even in thy extreme misery] He would awake for thee" (and come quickly to thy help). The error and sting in all this, the supposition that Job had been a wicked man and a hypocrite. The sentiment in itself true and profitable. (1) God the only help and refuge in trouble (Ps. xlvi. 1.) (2) The duty and interest of all in trouble to betake themselves to Him. (3) This to be attended to "betimes," at once, and with all earnestness. (4) Supplication to be made to Him for pardon, deliverance, and grace (Lam. iii. 41). (5) This to be done in sincerity and uprightness, with a renouncing of all sin (Ps. lxvi. 18). (6) The result a certain and speedy interposition in our behalf.

A twofold promise held out: 1. A peaceful and prosperous habitation; 2. A large increase in worldly possessions (verse 7). "He would make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous," (or, "would restore thy then righteous habitation, and endow it with perfect felicity"). Temporal blessing promised as the expression of the Divine favour. An insinuation that Job's dwelling had not formerly been a righteous one. Two great mercies indicated in this promise. (1) *A pious home*; a home where—(i.) God is daily and duly acknowledged and worshipped; (ii.) The members of the family live in love towards each other; (iii.) All the duties of morality and religion are carefully attended to. Such a dwelling contrasted with the "tents of wickedness" (Ps. lxxxiv. 10). (2) *A peaceful and prosperous home;* where—(i.) The inmates are at peace with God and with one another; (ii.) God prospers their honest endeavours to obtain a competent livelihood; (iii.) They are preserved from domestic troubles; (iv.) All the inmates are the pardoned and accepted children of God. A pious home usually a peaceful and prosperous one. There God commands his blessing (Ps. cxxxiii. 3). The ark brought a blessing with it into Obededom's house (2 Sam. vi. 10, 11). The voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous (Ps. cxviii. 15). A peaceful habitation a new covenant blessing (Is. xxxii. 18). The dove of Divine peace hovers over the altar of domestic worship.

III. Bildad refers Job to the Fathers for instruction (verse 8).

"Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers,"—to the examination of the records of those still further distant, as Noah, Shem, &c. The reason given: "For we (the present generation as compared with the past, or viewed as single individuals) are but of yesterday and know nothing" (—have comparatively little knowledge and experience of God's dealings with men); "because our days upon earth (as mere individuals, or as compared with those of our ancestors), are a shadow. Shall they not teach thee and tell thee [how God acts towards men in this world], and utter words out of their heart," —well-pondered sayings as the result of their careful observation and reflection? Knowledge in the earlier period of the world rather *the results of observation.* These embodied in poetical and proverbial sayings. Such sayings existed either as written records or as traditional poetry. Especially valued by the Arabs, and still esteemed by them as the strongest testimonies. Mostly, however, the productions only of human wisdom, and to be distinguished from Divine revelation. Amongst them were the utterances of inspired men, as that of Enoch (Jude 14.).

Tradition.

Such traditions to be received with deference and respect, but not as of binding authority. Their authority that of the arguments which support them. Men always fallible, except as inspired by God to deliver truth. The fathers of the race and the fathers of the Church in the same category. Their wisdom and experience neither to be disregarded nor implicitly received. Increased light obtained with the advance of ages and the increase of experience. The wisdom and experience of each generation to be valued as a contribution to that of its successors. Opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making [*Milton*]. It is only the weak who, at each epoch, believe mankind to have arrived at the culminating point of their progressive march [*Humboldt*]. The famous test of ecclesiastical tradition a safe one, if it could be found,—what has been taught *by all*, taught *always*, and taught *everywhere*. The longevity of the earlier ages favourable for wider observation. In the time of Job, human life reduced to about 200 years. Noah lived to be 950; Arphaxad, his grandson, only 438; Peleg, the great

grandson of Arphaxad, 239; Serug, Peleg's grandson, probably about the time of Job, 230; Terah, Serug's grandson and the father of Abraham, 205. The change apparent and striking to those living at the time. Hence Bildad's acknowledgment—

Human Life a Shadow.

Time measured at that time by the shadow projected by the index of a dial, a spear stuck in the ground, &c. Man's life but a solar day,—as the shadow fleeting along the dial-plate. Life mercifully reduced in consequence of sin. A long, vigorous life-time more favourable to the development of human depravity. "The heart never grows better by age: I fear, worse,—always harder" [*Lord Chesterfield*]. Great longevity only gives occasion to the godly for David's lament (Ps. cxx. 5, 6). The present extent of human life long enough for a child of God to be kept from home (2 Cor. v. 6, 8). Life, as a "*shadow*," calls for—(1) *Diligence in the improvement of it.* Momentous issues hang on the fleeting shadow. Eternal interests demand despatch. (2) *A loose hold of things of time.* Like life itself, "all here is shadow, all beyond is substance." Foolish to set the heart on a shadow. "He builds too low who builds beneath the skies." (3) *A proper estimate to be made of the troubles and joys, the possessions and pursuits, of the present life.* (4) *Earnestness in securing a solid and lasting happiness beyond the grave.*

IV. Quotation from the ancients (verses 11—19). Exhibits:

1. *The temporary prosperity of the ungodly.* Compared—(1) To the *paper-reed* of Egypt, and the *flag* of the marsh or *grass* of the meadow (verse 11). "Can the rush (or 'papyrus') grow up without mire? Can the flag ('marsh-plant,' or 'grass of the meadow,'—same word wrongly translated 'meadow' in Gen. xli. 2.) grow without water?" The papyrus of the Nile formerly used in the manufacture of garments, shoes, baskets, boats, and *paper*, whence our English word. The papyrus probably employed by the Jews of Alexandria for writing on while translating the Old Testament into Greek, having used this very word in the place of our "rush." Now only found in marshes of the White Nile in Nubia, and in one or two spots in Palestine. Such plants capable of receiving a large supply of water which they require for their nourishment. Grow tall and luxuriant while the water is supplied; but speedily die when that supply is withdrawn. Picture of worldly men who have no living principle of enduring prosperity within themselves, either in the love of God *in* them, or the blessing of God *on* them. Their prosperity only from favourable circumstances, which may at any time come to an end. Contrast Haman with Joseph, both attaining to the highest prosperity. (2) To a *spider's web*, constructed with the greatest care, and expected to prove a lasting support to its possessor, but which the slightest accident may disturb and destroy (verse 14). "Whose trust (his riches, &c., in which he trusts) shall be a spider's web"—as unsubstantial and as certain speedily to perish. "The spider's most attenuated thread is cord, is cable," compared to such prosperity and trust. (3) To a *luxuriant garden-tree*, growing near a fountain and striking its numerous roots into the rocky bed on which it stands, open to the sun, and with every advantage of soil and situation (verse 16, 17). "He is green (or moist) before the sun (enjoying the warm and genial influence of its rays), and his branch shooteth forth in his garden: his roots are wrapped about the heap (or fountain), and seeth the place of stones" (enjoys the benefit of rocky strata for its support). A still more striking picture of the prosperous ungodly than the tall and luxuriant marsh-plant. Compare Ps. xxxvii. 35.

2. *The certain and speedy termination of that prosperity.* (1) The *papyrus* or *marsh-plant* suddenly withers from want of the required supply of water (verse 12). "Whilst it is yet in its greenness (promising long continuance), and not cut down (—without any hand applied to pluck or cut it down), it withereth before any other herb" (suddenly decays without giving notice of the approaching change, while other plants less dependent on a large supply of moisture continue to live). Soon ripe, soon rotten. The prosperity of the ungodly a Jonah's gourd. (2) The *spider's web*, on which he depends for his support, speedily perishes by accident or the broom (verse 15). "He (the spider, or the ungodly whom he represents) shall lean on his house (on his web, or the riches, family, &c., of the worldly figured by it), but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast (or, lay hold of it—for its preservation, or rather for his own support), but it shall not endure." "Time destroys the well-built house as well as the spider's web" [*Arab Proverb*]. The prosperity and bliss of the worldly man perishes like that flimsy web. It is well if, like that web also, it does not bury its possessor in its ruins. (3) The *luxuriant tree*, spreading abroad its roots and branches, is suddenly struck by lightning or whirlwind, and at once becomes a leafless skeleton, or is laid prostrate on its native soil (verse 18). "If he destroy him (or, 'if he [or it]

be destroyed'—*Heb.* 'swallowed up') from his place, then it shall deny him, saying: I have not seen thee"—the place where it stood is forgotten. The application given by the Psalmist: "He (the wicked) passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found" (Ps. xxxvii. 36). History full of such instances. Haman, instead of parading on the monarch's horse, is left hanging on a felon's gallows. When the Messenians saw the renowned Philopœmon stripped and dragged along with his hands ignominiously bound behind his back, "they wept, and contemned all human greatness as a faithless support, as vanity and nothing" [*Plutarch*]. The Emperor Vitellius was driven through the streets of Rome naked, and then thrown into the Tiber.

"O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low!
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?"

3. *The application* (verse 13). "So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish."

Forgetfulness of God.

Those "who forget God" placed in the same class with the "hypocrite," or rather the "profane," or "wicked." Enough to characterize a man as wicked, that he "forgets God" (So Ps. ix. 17; l. 22). To forget God is—(1) Not to *think* of Him; (2) Not to *thank* Him; (3) Not to *serve and obey* Him. It is to forget—(1) His presence; (2) His Providence; (3) His precepts. Forgetfulness of another implies—(1) Want of love; (2) Want of respect. Men feel wounded on being forgotten by those whom they love, and on whose love they have a claim. Observe—

1. *Forgetfulness of God is the root and essence of all sin.* It is to ignore, and, as far as we are able, to annihilate, Him from His own universe. It is to treat Him as though there were no such Being. The fool hath said in his heart, "No God" (Ps. xiv. 1). To "remember" God equivalent to loving and serving Him (Eccles. xii. 1; Is. lxiv. 5).

2. *To forget God is to forget Him who possesses all claims to our remembrance*;—(1) From what He is *in Himself*; (2) From what He is and has been *to us*. God is—(1) The Being who is the Source and Centre of all possible excellence and loveliness; (2) Our Creator and Father; (3) Our Preserver from moment to moment; (4) Our Provider; (5) Our Protector; (6) Our Deliverer from trouble and danger; (7) Our Benefactor and best Friend; (8) In Christ our Redeemer and Saviour from sin and all its direful consequences.

3. *In forgetting God we give our thoughts and hearts to the world, which has no attraction but what it derives from Him, and which can neither satisfy nor save us.* To forget God, therefore, is both ingratitude, robbery, and idolatry. It is to rob Him of His honour as well as ourselves of peace.

4. *To remember God is to elevate, ennoble, and purify ourselves.*

V. Conclusion of Bildad's Speech (verse 20—22). Perhaps another of the sayings of the ancients. Same general subject—God's dealings with the righteous and the wicked. Intended, like parts of the speech of Eliphaz, either for consolation or conviction, or perhaps both. Contains—

1. *Comfort for the godly under trial* (verse 20). "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man" (see chap. i. 1). Hence, comfort for Job, *if such*. This, however, still to be *proved*. A righteous man may be cast *down*, but not cast *away* (Ps. xciv. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 9). Hence the difficulty to Job's friends in judging of his character. For the present, to all appearance, he was cast away. Himself, his family, and his fortunes, apparently a total wreck. The question therefore natural—Has Job been what he appeared? Or has he at length in his prosperity turned his back upon God? The Divine rule—"If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). Job himself conscious this was not *his* case: but this uncertain to the others. *A truly good man proved to be such by continuing good.* Care to be taken not only to *begin*, but to *persevere* in well-doing. Not to prove a castaway, Paul kept his body under (1 Cor. ix. 27). (verse 21). "Till (or, 'while'—connecting with verse 22) he shall fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing" (*margin*, "shouting for joy.") "Till," &c., implies continuance in well doing and well-suffering. In due time we reap, if we faint not. Sowing in tears, we reap in joy. The "shouting" of victory crowns the well-fought battle. That "shouting" one—(1) of *joy*. "The ransomed of the Lord return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads" (Isa. xxxv. 10). (2) Of *praise*. "Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 10). "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, give glory" (Ps. cxv. 1).

2. *Warning to the ungodly* (verse 20). "Neither will he help the evil-doers."—*Margin*, "take the ungodly by the hand," or, "take hold of their hand,"—*i.e.*, with the view of helping and countenancing them.

An unkind cut for poor Job, who seemed far enough from Divine help. So little can man know either love or hatred from that which is before him (Eccles. ix. 1). *Now* men see not the bright light which is in the clouds (ch xxxvii. 21). "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense." A solemn truth in the words of Bildad. The help which the ungodly receive is not God's help. Divine help the privilege of the godly (Ps. lxiii. 7; Acts xxvi. 22). *To enjoy God's help we must employ ourselves in God's service* (verse 22).—"They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame (as Ps. xxxv. 26; cix. 29; cxxxii 18). The ungodly, however prosperous for a time, condemned to shame. Shame the natural fruit of sin (Rom. vi. 21). Shame and contempt the characteristic and doom of the risen ungodly (Dan. xii. 2). "Shame" experienced —(1) That they madly threw away their souls for the pleasures of sin; (2) That those whom they hated and despised they now see crowned with joy and victory; (3) That they so basely fought against the God that made them.—"And the dwelling-place (*Heb.* 'tent,' as Ps. lxxxiv. 10) of the wicked shall come to nought."—as a tent when struck leaves no trace of it behind. The "tent" of the ungodly may be a rich pavilion, but its doom is written. *Sin brings families as well as individuals to certain ruin.*

CHAPTER IX.

JOB'S REPLY TO BILDAD.

Strongly affirms the truth of Bildad's speech as to God's justice (verse 1). Declares the impossibility of fallen man establishing his righteousness with God. The same already acknowledged in reference to himself (ch. vii. 20, 21). Only maintains, as before, his freedom from such sins as to make him specially obnoxious to God's judgments. Enlarges on the majesty, power and sovereignty of God, as exhibited in His works of creation and providence. Again complains of his severe and unmerited sufferings, and his inability to plead his own cause with God.

I. Acknowledgement of man's sinfulness and guilt in the sight of God (verse 2). "But (or, 'and') how should a man (a fallen, mortal man, '*enosh*') be just with God? if he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand" [of the charges to be brought against him]. The language suggests the

Way of a Sinner's acceptance with God.

1. *Man's state and necessity as a sinner the foundation of the Gospel.* Man is a sinner, unable to justify himself before God. The Gospel reveals a Saviour, and shows how man can obtain the justification he needs. In the Gospel is revealed "the righteousness of God"—a righteousness provided by God for man's justification; or, God's righteous way of justifying a sinner; viz., by the obedience and death of His own Son as the sinner's substitute (Rom. i. 17). To show this necessity of man and the provision made in the Gospel to meet it, Paul's object in the Epistle to the Romans.

2. *The necessity acknowledged by Job; the provision unnoticed by him as not bearing on the present controversy, and as not yet clearly known.* The way of forgiveness through vicarious suffering understood, as constantly exhibited in the sacrifices. That of a sinner standing accepted and righteous before God through the active and passive obedience of another not yet fully revealed. The "righteousness of God" better known in the time of David—"I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Ps. lxxi. 16). Still more clearly revealed by Isaiah—"Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory" (Is. xlv. 24, 25). The light still advancing in the time of Jeremiah, a century later: "I will raise unto David a righteous branch—and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6). Clearer still in the time of Daniel: "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies"—"for the Lord's (Adonai's) sake;" "Seventy weeks are determined to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness;" "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself" (Dan. ix. 17, 18, 24, 26).

3. *That provision "witnessed to by the law and the prophets," but only "now," in the Gospel dispensation, "manifested"* (Rom. iii. 21). Described as "the righteousness of God without the law, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe" (verse 22). The same ground and necessity of it alleged as confessed by Job: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (verse 23)

The "righteousness of God" to show that God is "just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," declared "at this time" in the "remission (or passing over) of sins that were past" (in previous generations) (verse 26).

4. "How can a man be just with God?"—*the great question for humanity.* The great concern for a dying hour, therefore the great concern *now.* How we stand with men a trifle in comparison. Without the Gospel, man's views regarding it false, and his efforts vain. Men look for it—(1) From their own virtues; (2) From the efficacy of sacrifices, ceremonies, and penances; (3) From the merits and intercession of others. But men's greatest virtues still leave them sinners. No efficacy in the temporary sufferings of man or beast to atone for sin. No sinner can have merit or power with God to procure his neighbour's acceptance any more than his own. "The sufficiency of my merit is to know that my merit is insufficient" [*Augustine*].

5. *God's way of acceptance every way suited to meet the case.* Salvation and acceptance through a substitute according to reason and analogy. Common among men to allow the merit of one to avail on behalf of another. The eye of Zaleucus admitted as sufficient satisfaction to justice for that of his son. The uplifted stump of Æschylus, in testimony of his services to his country, allowed to prevail for his brother's acquittal. One permitted to take another's place in serving his country in time of war. Elements in the substitution of Christ:—(1) The Divine law receives its perfect fulfilment and righteous penalty for man's transgression in man's nature; (2) The man Christ constituted by God a second Adam and head of the race; (3) As man fell by the disobedience of one, the first Adam, he rises by the obedience of one, the second Adam; (4) The dignity of the Substitute, as the Son of God, sufficient to impart to His merits all necessary efficacy; (5) His Divine nature and supernatural birth exempted Him from sin and the liability of the race; (6) Christ, with a human mother and a Divine Father, placed both *within* the race and *outside* of it, as necessary for substitution.

6. *Righteous in the righteousness of another,—the only way left for a sinner's acceptance with God.* Righteous in Christ, the Gospel plan and the believer's glory. Sufficient for the acceptance and justification of the entire race. A man who is now not just and accepted before God is so only from—(1) *Ignorance* of God's plan of making a sinner righteous; (2) *Unwillingness* to accept of it; (3) *Inability* to trust in it; or (4) *Indifference* in regard to his salvation.

II. The folly of contending against God (verse 4).

"He is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?" Men harden themselves against God—(1) While resisting His authority and disobeying his commands; (2) Rebelling and murmuring against His dealings in Providence; (3) Refusing the offers of His mercy in the Gospel. *Man possessed of the fearful power of hardening himself against God.* The folly of such contention seen—

1. *From the attributes of God.* God "wise in heart and mighty in strength." "Wise" to convict the offender and know how to deal with him; "Mighty" to arrest him and inflict the merited punishment. "Wise" to know and choose what is best to do; "Mighty" to accomplish it. Strength may prevail against wisdom, and wisdom against strength; but who can prevail against both combined? *Almighty strength safe in the hands of infinite wisdom.* Strength without wisdom makes a tyrant; strength with wisdom, a God. *In Christ the wisdom and strength of God are both employed on our behalf.* To His *wisdom* and *power*, as well as to His *love*, is due the plan of man's salvation (Eph. iii. 10; i. 19, 20). Christ both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24).

2. *From the facts of history.* "Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?" The sinning angels, Pharaoh, Sennacherib's army, the infidel leaders in the first French Revolution, referred to for an answer. For a creature to oppose God is for briars and thorns to do battle against fire. Success certain in falling in with God's plan and procedure; certain ruin in opposing it. Prosperity for a time sometimes the apparent result of opposing God. That prosperity generally only the precursor of ultimate ruin. Pharaoh never appeared nearer his object than when he met with destruction.

Magnificent description of the

Power and Majesty of God,

As exhibited in the works of creation and providence (verses 5—10). The description unequalled for poetic grandeur. Its elements—

1. *The sudden overthrow of mountains* (verse 5). "Which removeth the mountains, and they know not (or, before ever they are aware), and overthroweth them in his anger" (as in righteous judgment for the sins of the people). "To remove mountains," synonymous with an impossibility. Nothing impossible with God. Hannibal

celebrated for making a passage over the mountains; God removes them out of the way. Through the secret operation of natural causes, as in earthquakes and otherwise, mountains sometimes split, and portions torn away from the rest, with destruction of human life. All nature under God's control, and employed by Him in mercy or in judgment.

2. *Trembling of the earth's foundations, and disappearance of portions of its surface.* (verse 6). "Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof (or, its foundations,—the earth represented as a fabric or building) tremble." Nothing apparently more firm in its place than the earth; yet islands and other large portions of it frequently made to disappear, through subterraneous agencies in earthquakes, subsidences, and submersions, what was once land now becoming sea. Earthquakes and all apparently natural convulsions and changes entirely under God's control.

3. *The sun withholding its beams in obedience to His command* (verse 7). "Which commandeth the sun and it riseth not,"—sends not forth its rays; as in eclipses, dense fogs, the darkness frequently accompanying earthquakes, or when clouds and tempests darken the sky. The Divine command as powerful as at the beginning (Gen. i. 3). Joshua's command but an echo of his Master's (Josh. x. 12).

4. *The starry sky sealed up as a folded scroll.* "And sealeth up the stars." The starry heavens God's volume nightly spread open before us (Ps. xix. 1). Its characters sometimes entirely hidden by clouds, fogs, or tempests, as in Acts xxvii. 20. The nocturnal sky usually clear in the East, and the stars peculiarly brilliant. Hence the obscuration of it much more striking than with us. The clouds God's seal, not to be broken by any earthly power. The scroll to be one day folded up (Is. xxxiv. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. vi. 14).

5. *The firmament spread out as a canopy, and the clouds made His chariot* (verse 8). "Which alone (by His unaided power,—the one only Creator and Preserver of all) spreadeth out (or boweth) the heavens." Spread out the firmament at the beginning, still keeps it spread, and spreads it out afresh every morning as a curtain (Ps. civ. 2; Is. xl. 22). Employs the clouds as His chariot, bowing the heavens beneath Him, and putting darkness under His feet (Ps. xviii. 9; cxliv. 5). Probably a further description of a tempest. The verse a miniature of the scene so sublimely described in Ps. xviii. 7—15.

6. *The towering billows made a pathway for His feet.* "And treadeth on the waves (*margin*, 'heights') of the sea." Sublimely expresses His control over the mountain billows of the ocean, treading on them as a Conquerer and Ruler, restraining their fury, and keeping them from returning and again deluging the earth. So Christ visibly walked on the stormy lake of Galilee (Matt. xiv. 26). Comfort for the tempest-tossed mariner, to remember that the God who is love both walks on the wings of the wind and the waves of the sea. A man walking on the waves, the Egyptian hieroglyphic for impossibility. "With God all things are possible."

7. *The constellations of heaven, as His creatures, rising and setting at His will* verse 9). "Which maketh Arcturus (or the Great Bear), Orion, and the Pleiades (or Seven Stars), and the chambers of the south" (or the Constellations in the Southern Hemisphere, appearing to the Arabs only in summer). Preserves them in their original places, marshals them as His hosts, sustains and directs their apparent motions through all the successive seasons of the year.

8. *His acts wonderful, innumerable, and unsearchable* (verse 10). "Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." In creation, His works wondrous and unsearchable, both in their multitude and magnitude, their complexity and minuteness. A drop of water and a dusky spot hardly visible on the face of the sky, each reveals such wonders; the one, millions of perfectly-formed living creatures; the other millions of worlds, each world a sun. In Providence and the government of the universe, His works equally great and marvellous, innumerable and beyond our power of investigation. "His thoughts a great deep." "Deep in unfathomable mines," &c.

Lessons from this description:—

1. Ruinous to resist a Being of such power and majesty.

2. Blessed to have such a Being for our friend; miserable to have Him for a foe.

3. Our duty and happiness to trust Him in the most trying and apparently hopeless situations.

4. His appointment and dispensations to be meekly submitted to.

5. A Being of such perfections to be reverenced, adored, and obeyed.

III. God's Perfections and Dealings viewed by Job in relation to Himself.

1. *Job declares God's incomprehensibleness in His dealings with him* (verse 11). "Lo, he goeth by me (is near me, in the dealings of his Providence), and I see him not; he passeth on also (from one stroke to

another, or 'passeth through like a whirlwind,' Is. xxi. 1), but I perceive him not" (do not apprehend either His meaning or His love). A great part of Job's trial, that while God was so painfully visiting him he was entirely in the dark as to His meaning. Contrasted with his experience in former trials (chap. xxix. 3). Observe—(1) *A child of God sometimes entirely in the dark as to the meaning of God's dealings with Him.* Perplexity and bewilderment as to the cause of our trials on *God's* side, sometimes no small part of them. One of the greatest trials of a believer to be under trouble, and not to apprehend God's love in it. (2) *God's incomprehensibleness an exercise for faith.* His children to trust Him in the dark. God most glorified by such confiding faith. Abraham an example (Rom. iv. 19—21; Heb. xi. 8, 17—19). (3) *Incomprehensibleness a feature in God's character and conduct.* His ways in the sea, and His footsteps not known (Ps. lxxvii 19). His ways past finding out (Rom. xi. 33). The glory of God is to conceal a thing (Pr. xxv. 2). God's dealings incomprehensible to us—(i.) as to their *reasons*; (ii.) as to their *ends*. "What I do thou knowest not now" (John xiii. 7). Part of the darkness, of sin that God is near and yet not perceived. His close and constant nearness a matter for praise and adoration (Ps. cxxxix. 5). Analogy between God's dealings in nature and in Providence. The operations and effects obvious, the agent Himself unseen. The operation of natural causes manifest; the moving power behind and under these entirely hidden (Acts xvii. 28).

2. *Job acknowledges God's sovereignty and irresistible power* (verse 12). "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? (*margin* 'turn him away'). Who will say unto him, 'What doest thou?'" Observe—(1) *God takes away as He pleases.* Already acknowledged by Job in his calamities (ch. i. 21; ii. 10). Good to recognize God's hand in our losses. No evil but from God, either directly or indirectly (Is. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6). Satan rather than God, the *immediate* author of Job's calamities. Yet Satan's action is not without God's permission. *Satan only God's instrument in accomplishing His purpose of trying His people.*—(2) *When God takes away, none can hinder Him.* God possesses not only the *right* but the *might* to do as He pleases. Our comfort to know that both are exercised in wisdom, goodness, and holiness. Good to remember that when God takes away, that—(i.) He only takes away *His own*; (ii.) He takes away *for our good. Job a greater gainer by his losses than he had ever been by his gains.* To say to God, What doest Thou? is as *ignorant* as it is *wicked*. What God does, He does because it is best. God gives no reason to impenitent sinners either as to *what* He does or *why* He does it. A child of God *would* not hinder Him even if he *could*.—(3) *Opposition to God and His will as useless as it is wicked* (verse 13). "If God will not withdraw his anger (or simply, 'God will not withdraw,' &c.), the proud helpers do stoop under Him." God's anger not to be turned away by man's opposition, but by repentance, submission, and faith (Ps. ii. 10—12). His "anger" put for the *rod* which is the expression of it. All creature help against God and His chastisements utterly vain. Israel's sin, that when under the rod they went to Egypt for help (Is. xxx. 2; xxxi. 1). Egypt in their pride, ready to render that help (Is. xxx. 4). Both helpers and helped obliged in the end to stoop under the rod (Is. xxxi. 3). Not uncommon for the ungodly to agree to mutual help in resisting God and His purposes (Ps. ii. 1—3; lxxxiii. 5—8; Acts xxi. 28; xxiii. 12). Such confederacies frequent in the time of the Reformation. Combinations against the Protestant religion combinations against God and his truth. Pride the characteristic of such confederacies (Ex. v. 2; xv. 9). Their end seen in the overthrow of sinning angels and the destruction of Pharaoh's host (Jude 6; Ex. xv. 9). The final destruction of anti-christian combinations yet to be exhibited (Rev. xvii. 12—14; xix. 11—21). *The essence of pride to oppose oneself to God's purposes.*—(4) *Good to take warning from others not to fall into their sin* (verse 15). "How much less shall I answer him [in his charges against me], and choose out my words to reason with him." [as defendant in my cause]. *Humility learned by consideration of God's mightiness.* If the proudest opposers of God and His purposes must stoop, how then shall I dispute with Him?—(5) *Silence and submission under God's rebuke our interest as well as our duty* (verse 15). "Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer [at his bar], but I would make supplication to my judge" (or to him debating with me). Man's wisdom not to *dispute with God, but to submit to Him.* God ever ready to hear the sinner when he *supplicates*, but never when he *disputes. However blameless his conduct, or good his conscience, fallen man still a sinner before God.* "FOUND WANTING," written on man's best performances. *God better acquainted with our character and conduct than we are ourselves* (1 Cor. iv. 4; 1 John iii. 20). Constant reason for humiliation and faith (Ps. xix. 12; cxxxix. 23, 24).—(6) *The tried soul ready to fall back into despondency and un-*

belief (verse 16). "If I had (or have) called [on Him to answer my complaints], and he had (or hath) answered me [by condescending to take the place of a defendant], yet would (or will) I not believe that he had (or hath) hearkened to my voice." Unbelief made the continuance of Job's sufferings an argument that God had not hearkened to his prayer. The part of the *flesh*, to reason from the *dealings* of God's *hand* to the *purposes* of God's *heart*. *Prayer often heard before the proof of it is apparent.* Faith required to believe this (Mark xi. 24). *Unbelief* must *see* the answer before it believes in it; *faith* believes in it before seeing it. *Prayer, like seed, which for a time lies buried in the earth.* God's time for answering prayer reserved in His own hand. *Prayer attended to, and prayer answered, two different things.* The former usually followed sooner or later by the latter. *Receiving* an answer to be distinguished from the *actual enjoying* of it (Mark xi. 24). Faith believes that it *receives* the blessing asked before it *sees* it: the *seeing* comes in God's time.—(7) *Unbelief eyes outward dealings* (verse 17, 18). "For he breaketh me with a tempest (or, 'crusheth me as in a whirlwind'), he multiplieth my wounds without cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath (enjoy the feast respite or relief), but filleth me with bitterness." The ground of Job's despondency and unbelief. Continued suffering forbids him to believe God regards His prayers. *Hard to believe in God's love when so terribly crushed with successive strokes of His Providence.* A tragic but true description of Job's sufferings. "Broken"—crushed, or "bruised," as in Gen. iii. 15. "With a tempest," or "in a whirlwind"—suddenly—violently—irresistibly, like one continually lifted up and then dashed down again forcibly to the ground. This as suffered "without cause" known to himself, only all the more painful. His suffering "without cause," God's own account of the matter (ch. ii. 3). The thing denied by the friends, but persistently maintained by Job, while yet acknowledging himself a sinner before God. Job ignorant of God's purpose in the affliction. What was really done by *Satan*, Job in his ignorance ascribes to *God*. Ignorant of Satan's *malice*, he can only think of God's *arbitrariness*. Satan having destroyed Job's children by one "whirlwind," thinks to destroy Job himself by another of a different nature. *Sufferings long continued and without intermission terribly exhausting and crushing to the human spirit.* The "bitterness" of Job's outward sufferings only the counterpart of the bitterness in his soul. *Heroic faith to believe in God's gracious regard in such terribly distressing circumstances.* Such experience and faith that of Jesus Himself (Matt. xxvi. 38, xxvii. 46). Job's faith also at times triumphant (ch. xix. 25; xxiii. 10).

IV. Job's mental agitation in respect to his case (verses 19—21).

1. *His inability to plead with God* (verse 19).—"If I speak of strength (—if the question be one of strength), lo! he is strong (or, 'a strong One is here'; or, 'the strong One saith, here am I'); and if of judgment —(if the question be of one of *right*), who shall set me a time to plead" (or, 'who shall bring him [or us] into court' [that as umpire, we may debate the case before him]. Though conscious of innocence, Job feels there is no possibility of pleading his case against God. As regards power, God is the Mighty One, with whom no creature may contend. He is sovereign and supreme, so that there can be no umpire to summon both parties to trial. No creature therefore may dispute with God. Happily, no creature *needs*. *Every one's case left safe in His hands* Only agitation and unrest till this is done Job at last, after all his tumults and tossings, is brought to this, and then has peace. The lesson for Job and all tried ones,—*not to dispute with God, but to leave the case confidingly in His hands, assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right.* The lesson that of the 37th Psalm. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6).

2. *His certainty of condemnation notwithstanding His conscious integrity* (verse 20) "If I justify myself (or, 'although I be righteous'), mine own mouth shall condemn me (—by its very utterances will shew me guilty), if I say, I am perfect (or, 'although I am upright'), it shall also prove me perverse" (or, 'He, *i.e.* God, shall declare me guilty'). A great truth *felt*, though unwillingly acknowledged by the "perfect" man. *However upright and consciously innocent, a fallen man must yet stand condemned before his Maker.* To exhibit this, one of the great objects of the book of Job. Fallen man, at his best estate, a *sinner*, and so *guilty* before God. The Apostle's declaration, as shewing the necessity for the Gospel scheme (Rom. iii. 23). No flesh living capable of being justified in God's sight (Ps. cxliii. 2). "No just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20). To be justified before God on the ground of his own merits, a man must be absolutely sinless (Gal. iii. 10; Jam. ii. 10). Such a person nowhere to be found (1 John i. 8). *The mouth that pleads "Not guilty" before God*

condemns itself. Its very language proves the man a sinner by convicting him—(1) Of pride; (2) Of rebelliousness; (3) Of falsehood. *Self-righteousness in a sinner sufficient to condemn him.* The object of the law not to justify but to silence (Rom. iii. 19). A man's salvation and peace is found—(1) in acknowledging guilt and taking the place of a lost sinner before God; (2) In casting himself entirely on His mercy as flowing through a Saviour's atoning blood (Rom. iii. 24).

3. *His resolution to maintain his integrity at all costs* (verse 21). "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul (or, I am blameless and sincere, I care not for myself'); I would despise (or, I 'despise') my life." As an honest man, conscious of sincerity and uprightness, Job refuses to confess himself a hypocrite and secret transgressor, in order to obtain the restoration to temporal prosperity held out by his friends. A contest maintained by Job with his friends as well as with God. As against *God*, he was wrong; as against *men*, he was right. Before *God*, he must and does acknowledge himself a sinner; before *men*, he maintains his integrity. In asserting himself "perfect" (blameless, sincere, upright), he only does what God had done for him (chap. i 8; ii. 3). *A man may boldly maintain his integrity before his fellow men, while he humbly abases himself as a sinner before God.* In the sight of God, Paul bows as "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15); before a human tribunal, he declares—"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts xxiii. 1).

V. Perplexed thoughts as to the Divine procedure in the present world (verses 22—24).

1. *Its indiscriminateness* (verse 22). "This is one thing (or, 'it is all one'); therefore I said it, he destroyeth the perfect (the blameless or upright) and the wicked." Both classes treated, as a rule, without discrimination in the present life. Maintained by Job—(1) As against the *friends.* Calamities not confined to the wicked; (2) As against *God Himself.* No special regard had to those who serve Him. Such indiscriminate procedure maintained in the Book of Ecclesiastes (chap. ix. 2, 3). One of the *facts* in the Divine government observed by thoughtful and good men. Both classes suffer alike, as in war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, tempests, &c. Both share equally in the ills and calamities of life. A mystery and a stumblingblock. To be regarded—(1) As *an argument for a future state.* The difference between the righteous and the wicked reserved for a future day (Mal. iii. 18).—(2) As *a trial for faith in the Divine character.* Hence the murmurings of unbelieving professors (Mal. iii. 13, 15).

2. *Its apparent indifference to the sufferings of the godly* (verse 23). "If the scourge slay suddenly (or, indiscriminately), he will laugh (or, it laugheth) at the trial of the innocent." The supposed case already asserted (verse 22). Job's own case before his view. Providence often has the appearance of cruel indifference to the sufferings of the innocent. *The feelings of God's heart not to be judged by the dealings of His hand.* Divine "love and hatred" not known by any mere outward dispensation (Eccles. ix. 1). The godly sometimes "accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps. xliv. 22). The Divine sympathy for the suffering exhibited in the character of Jesus. For a time Jesus Himself also sometimes appeared indifferent to suffering (Matt. xv. 23—26; Mark iv. 38; John xi. 6). The Divine dealings in the present life are—(1) *Probative;* (2) *Disciplinary.* The trial of the righteous found at last unto praise, and honour, and glory (1 Pet. i. 7). *Precious metal proved as well as purified by the fire.* The scourge that destroys the guilty only tries the good (So Ps. xi. 5; vii. 11).

3. *Its apparently unjust partiality* (verse 24). "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covereth the faces of the judges thereof." Two anomalies—(1) The wicked are exalted to power, while godly men are depressed; (2) Tyrants are allowed to reign while rightful rulers are treated with ignominy and put to death (Eccles. vii. 8. Same sentiment (Ps. xii. 8). The ungodly styled "the man of the earth" (Ps x. 18). Satan himself the "prince of this world." He and his host the "rulers of the darkness of this world." Godly men in Christ earth's proper judges and rulers (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3; Rev. i. 5). Such often treated in the providence of God as malefactors. Job himself an example (ch. xxix. 7—17, 25; xxx. 10—23). God the author of civil government. The earth with its various states and governments in His hand. Given over by Him to others according to His will. Often in judgment to bad men (Dan. iv. 17). By Him kings reign. He putteth down one and setteth up another (Ps. lxxv. 7; Dan. ii. 21). Ruleth in the kingdom of men, and appointeth over it whomsoever he will (Dan. iv. 17, 25; v. 21). Does this in His invisible and mysterious providence, without infringement on man's free will or the operation of second causes. This fact one of the elements in the doctrine of "wisdom," exhibited in this and other inspired books of the same period.

4. *The mysterious certainly connected with it.* "If not (—if the case be not so), where

and who is he [who does these things]?" Or, "if the case be not thus [viz., that God does these things], who is it [that does them]?" The facts undeniable; who but One can be the author of them? Acknowledged mystery in these anomalies in the government of a righteous God. Yet none but God can be the author of them. Earth necessarily under a Supreme Ruler. That Ruler necessarily righteous. The doctrine of two co-ordinate principles not to be admitted. God the author both of good and evil—light and darkness (Is. xlv. 7). The existence and prevalence of evil in the world, including the elevation of wicked rulers, one of the mysteries in Divine Providence. God the author of evil—(1) By permission; (2) By predestination; (3) By Providence. Satan the author of evil—(1) Actually; (2) Subordinately; (3) Instrumentally. Evil under the Divine government permitted for wise and benevolent purposes. His wisdom and benevolence seen—(1) In restraining the evil; (2) In overruling it for good; (3) In employing it for the exhibition of His own perfections (Ps. lxxvi. 10). God displays His glory, while "from seeming evil still educing good." *Tyrants and evil rulers God's scourge to a guilty land.* The terrible and destructive thunderstorm the purifier of the atmosphere. The rainbow the offspring of the dark cloud behind it. The grandest scenery the product of earth's terrible convulsions. The stars shine out most brilliantly from the blackest sky. Deep shadows give effect to the picture—an occasional discord to the music. Old and fractured instruments often yield the sweetest tones. Wicked hands the agencies in man's redemption (Acts ii. 23).

VI. Reflections on his own pitiful condition (verses 25—35).

1. *The rapid termination of his prosperity and his life* (verse 25). "Now my days are (or, have been) swifter than a post (or, runner,—a state-courier carrying letters or despatches, sometimes travelling a hundred and fifty miles in less than twenty-four hours; dromedaries, able to outrun the fleetest horses, also employed (Esther viii. 14); they flee (or, have fled) away; they see (or, have seen) no good." Job had not reached the meridian of life. Lived after his troubles a hundred and forty years. His present age probably not more than the half of that. His death, which appeared at hand, therefore sadly premature. His past prosperity accordingly short-lived. In the presence of his now accumulated miseries, his days appear to have witnessed no happiness. *Present misery apt to make us overlook past mercy.* Two more comparisons to represent the swiftness with which his life had sped to its close—(1) A reed-skiff or canoe, formed of the papyrus of the Nile, remarkable for its lightness and swiftness (verse 26). "They are (or have) passed away as the swift ships" (*margin*, "ships of desire," or, "ships of Eben;" more probably "ships of papyrus," like Is. xviii. 2.) (2) An eagle, swiftest of birds, eagerly pouncing down on its prey. "As the eagle hasteth," &c. A frequent comparison. (See Deut. xxviii. 49; Jer. iv. 13; Lam. iv. 19.)

Human Life a Voyage.

Each individual's life fitly compared to a swift sailing vessel speeding onwards on her voyage.—1. *Constant and rapid progress.* No stoppage till we reach the place of destination.—2. The *precise length of the voyage various* in each case.—3. The *length of the voyage and the time of its termination previously unknown.*—4. The *voyage a most important one to each.* All others comparatively insignificant. Its issue an eternity of happiness or woe.—5. The *freight* an *immortal spirit* with boundless capacities.—6. The *place of destination* one or other of *only two*, widely remote from each other in character and situation—a paradise of bliss and a home of glory, or a region of darkness and despair.—7. *Each vessel under the direction of an invisible power that presides at the helm.* The helmsman in each case, either the Prince of Life, or the Prince of Darkness. The object of the former is to steer the vessel to glory; that of the latter to wreck it on the shores of death. The first human vessel launched with the former at the helm. Man listening to the flattering proposals of the latter accepted him for his pilot. Since then human life has been started under the influence of the Prince of Darkness, the "god of this world." The choice made by Adam of a pilot, confirmed by his offspring who are born in his likeness. Man might have been hopelessly left to his miserable and ungrateful choice. Mercy, however, places again within his reach a change of pilots. The Prince of Life, having atoned for man's rebellion, offers again to take charge of the vessel. Conscious of their sin and misery, many thankfully accept His offer and safely reach the port of peace. Others, rejecting it, are wrecked on the rocks of eternal ruin. —Two important questions—(1) *Whither am I bound?* For heaven or for hell? (2) *Who is my pilot?* Christ or the Wicked One?

2. *The inability of his efforts to overcome his heaviness* (verses 27, 28). "If I say, I will forget my complaint (lay aside my lamentation); I will leave off my heaviness and comfort myself (or, I will put away my

sorrowful countenance and brighten up), I am afraid of all my sorrow (—I shudder at my accumulated griefs). I know that thou wilt not hold (or, treat me as) innocent" (whatever I may be or may deem myself). A painful struggle between the enlightened spirit, and the flesh aided by the depressing nature of disease and the buffetings of the invisible adversary. Similar struggle in David—"Why art thou cast down?" &c. (Ps. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5). *The believer often conscious that he ought to rejoice when unbelief forbids him.* Much more under the New than the Old Testament to make a child of God "lay aside his sorrowful countenance and brighten up." To "rejoice in the Lord" in the midst of trials, made much easier now than in the days of Job. The aim of Jesus to give his people ground to "rejoice in tribulation," (John xiv. 27; xv. 11; xvi. 33). Enjoined on them (Phil. iv. 4). Their actual experience (Rom. v. 3; 1 Pet. i. 6). Job kept from "brightening up" by the thought that, though *conscious of innocence*, God would still hold and treat him as *guilty*. The believer able now to rejoice in the thought that, though *conscious of guilt*, God for Christ's sake will hold and treat him as *innocent*, making him accepted in the beloved."

3. *His despair of being able to obtain acquittance with God* (verse 29). "If I be wicked (or simply, 'I am,' or 'shall be wicked;' *i.e.*, must be held and treated as such), why then labour I in vain" [to maintain a good conscience or attempt to prove my innocence]? A hard and unbelieving thought of God, suggested by his own carnal nature, and by the enemy who sought to bring him to curse his Maker as arbitrary, tyrannical, and unjust. Satan's old trade (Gen. iii. 1, 4, 5). The bitter and ungenerous thought too fondly dwelt upon by Job. Perhaps some secret consciousness of inward corruption, and of the truth as regarded himself (verse 30). "If I wash myself with snow-water (the purest to be got), and make my hands never so clean (or, 'cleanse my hands with lye'—used with oil instead of soap), yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch (or pit), and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (*margin*, "make me to be abhorred"). The idea: All my attempts to make my heart and life pure will with Thee be utterly vain,—Thou wilt still regard me as impure and abominable. The thought probably suggested by—(1) his conscious endeavours to maintain purity of heart and life; (2) his treatment at God's hands being such as apparently to indicate the Divine condemnation. *Should* have been awakened by—(1) Conscious corruption; (2) Apprehension of the Divine purity. So Isaiah (Is. vi. 5). So Job hi

wards (ch. xl. 4; xlii. 5, 6). The language probably now dictated by peevishness and bitterness. Yet true, though in a different sense from that intended. All man's attempts to justify and purify himself before God in vain. He still remains wicked, guilty, and abominable in the sight of a holy God. Man, as a fallen child of Adam, in his very nature corrupt and opposed to God. All self-attempts leave his nature unchanged and polluting all his actions. Such attempts themselves only the offspring of pride and self-righteousness, therefore abominable. Humility and love the only things in a creature acceptable to God. Man's self-attempts leave him destitute of both. Guilt not to be effaced but by an atonement, or satisfaction to Divine justice. The waters of the ocean unable to wash out a single blood-spot of guilt. Only Almighty power able to remove the leopard's spots or whiten the Ethiopian's skin. In Christ provision made both for the removal of guilt and impurity. His blood removes the one, His Spirit's grace the other. From His pierced side came forth both "blood and water" (John xix. 34; 1 John v. 6, 8). The true posture of each fallen child of man in Luke xviii. 13. The prayer (Ps. li. 7). The invitation (Is. i. 18). The promise (Ez. xxxvi. 25). The acceptance (1 John i. 7) The thanksgiving (Rev. i. 5). A gracious plunging of the self-purified into the ditch, in the Divinely awakened consciousness of guilt and corruption. Saul carefully washed at Jerusalem; blessedly plunged in the ditch at Damascus (Acts ix. 9—11; xxvi. 4, 5).

4. *Job's inability to plead his cause before God* (verse 32). "For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him [as defendant at the bar], and that we should come together in judgment" [to plead our respective causes]. Job thinks he has a case against God, as God appears to have one against him. Wishes he could have them tried, but feels that the distance between him and God precludes the thought (verse 33). "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us (*margin*, "one that should argue;" or, "an umpire;" properly, an arbitrator with authority to restrain each party, and to bind them to his decision), that might lay his hand [authoritatively] upon us both." Hence the supposed impossibility of an equal contest. What Job desiderated has, in a much better sense, been provided for sinful man. A daysman, or Mediator, has been found in the person of Jesus Christ—the fellow both of God and man (Zech. xiii. 7). Not to afford man an opportunity of vainly pleading his innocence against God, but of humbly acknowledging his guilt and obtaining mercy (1 John i. 9;

1 Tim. ii. 5, 6). Job imagines he could make good his case but for the Divine power and majesty that overawe him (verse 34). "Let him take his rod away from me (—his power, and perhaps the effect of it, his affliction), and let not his fear (or terrible majesty) terrify me. Then, would I speak and not fear him: but it is not so with me" (*margin* "but I am not so with myself;" or, "for I am not so in mind,"—as to fear him in the controversy from any consciousness of guilt). The fear of the Divine majesty the common feeling of humanity. Even the seraphim cover their faces with their wings before God. The doors of the temple and the foundations of Sinai shook at His presence. "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The "rod" of God seen removed in the person and work of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," and who "suffered for our sins, the Just one in the room of the unjust." The rays of Divine majesty softened in the God-man, Christ Jesus. The Father seen in him who was the "man of sorrows" (John xiv. 9). Jesus the way to the Father. Through Him we enter with boldness into the holiest of all (John xiv. 6; Heb. x. 19—22). Christ the true Jacob's ladder. The foot on the earth, and the top reaching to heaven (John i. 51; Gen. xxviii. 12).

CHAPTER X.

JOB'S REPLY TO BILDAD—CONTINUED.

His speech takes the form rather of an expostulation with God in regard to his afflictions. The vehemence of his spirit reaches its height in this chapter. Does not renounce God, but takes great liberty in addressing Him. The liberty, however, rather that of a child with a father whose clouded and averted face he can neither understand nor endure.

I. His impatience of life, and his resolution to give free vent to his complaints (verse 1).

"My soul is weary of (or, 'loathes,' or 'bursts in') my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself (I will give loose reins to my complaint): I will speak," &c. The language of a deeply distressed and even desperate man. Contrasted with Ps. xxxix. 1, and Lam. iii. 39; and especially with New Testament experience (Phil. iv. 5—7; Rom. v. 3; 1 Pet. i. 6—8). In Job's words we have—(1) *An unhappy state of mind allowed*—"My soul is weary of my life." So Rebekah (Gen. xxvii. 46); Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4); and Jonah (iv. 8). Believers in trouble are to possess their souls *in patience*. A mind stayed on God is kept "in perfect peace."—(2) *An unwise resolution formed*—"I will leave my complaint upon myself, &c." Safer and wiser to *check* than to *indulge* complaints regarding God's dealings with us. *The impatience of the flesh makes men sit under Elijah's juniper tree and Jonah's gourd.* Yet a troubled soul, familiar with God, pours out its complaints into His ear without sin (Ps. xlii. 6—11). Life in itself a mercy; yet sometimes would be little better than hell but for the hopes of heaven [*Trapp*].

II. His desire not to be treated as guilty, without knowing the grounds of it (verse 2).

"I will say unto God." Implies—(1) *Deep distress*, extorting the language. (2) *A childlike confidence and freedom towards God.* (3) *Peevishness and want of reverence.* —"Do not condemn me" (or, treat me as a guilty person). *A father's displeasure is a generous child's greatest grief.* A single sin sufficient to make us guilty before God (James ii. 10; Gal. iii. 10). Only one way for a sinner to be freed from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1, 34). Christ the Righteous suffers in the place of the condemned sinner (2 Cor. v. 21). A believer, however, still sometimes either *really* or *apparently* under God's displeasure (Isa. liv. 7—9; lvii. 17—18).—"Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." Job's trial, that God seemed to have a controversy with him while he was ignorant of the cause. *A spiritually enlightened man thinks that God has a controversy with him when there is none; an unrenewed man does not believe in it when it actually exists.*—With different classes and individuals God may have various

Grounds of Controversy.

1. With *nations and unconverted men.* The grounds—(1) Rebellion against his authority; (2) Unthankfulness for His mercies; (3) Apostacy from His religion; (4) Persecution of His cause and people; (5) Contempt of His ordinances; (6) Rejection of His Son.

2. With *churches and individual Christians.* The grounds may be—(1) Departure from

first love (Rev. ii. 4, 5); (2) Formality and hypocrisy (Rev. iii. 1); (3) Pride and self-satisfaction (Rev. iii. 1—7); (4) Lukewarmness (Rev. iii. 15, 16); (5) Unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness (John xv. 2); (6) Covetousness and wordly-mindedness (Is. lvii. 17). Troubles laid on believers may be—(1) On account of *past or present sin*; (2) For *trial and manifestation of grace*; (3) For *purification and spiritual growth*; (4) For *exhibition of Divine support*.

III. Appeal to God against His present treatment (verses 3—12).

The grounds of this appeal:

1. *Its inconsistency with God's nature and honour* (verse 3). "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress, that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?" Three things apparently involved in Job's afflictions:—(1) Oppression on the part of God; (2) Contempt of His own works; (3) Countenance given to the sentiments and practice of ungodly men who deny His providence if not His very existence, and maintain the uselessness of religion. In Job's case there appeared no ground for such severe treatment. Though God's own creature, he seemed to be treated as unworthy of regard. As a religious man, his great afflictions might give occasion to the ungodly to harden themselves in their irreligion. All this is inconsistent with God's nature and honour. God's nature is love. A God of truth and without iniquity. Afflicts none willingly. Despises not any. Ungodliness His abomination. Observe:—(1) *God's procedure sometimes apparently at variance with His nature and character.* (2) *That inconsistency only in appearance.* God cannot act but in accordance with His nature, which is love and light, goodness, purity, and justice. (3) *God's glory and honour involved in His dealings with His creatures, and especially with His servants.* (4) *God's nature and character a rock for our feet under the most trying dispensations.*

2. *God's omniscience* (verse 4). "Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?" (Verse 7) "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." Conscious of innocence we can appeal to Divine omniscience for a favourable verdict. Man looks on the outward appearance; God's eyes penetrate the heart (1 Sam. xvi. 7). Man deceived by appearances. Sees imperfectly into character and conduct. Requires lengthened observation to arrive at the truth. Often swayed by passion and partiality. God takes all into one view at once (Acts xv. 18). His eyes a flame of fire (Rev. i. 14). His servants' character and conduct often misjudged by men. Perfectly known to God. Job's comfort (ch. xvi. 19; xxiii. 10). His trial that his friends read his character in his sufferings. His Antitype similarly misjudged (Is. liii. 4; John vii. 23). *God's* knowledge of Job's innocence already shewn in the history. Job's *own* knowledge of it as yet only from his own consciousness. This consciousness his confidence towards God. "If our hearts condemn us not," &c. (1 John iii. 21). Job a sinner, but not a "wicked" sinner. Sinned not deliberately and from choice. Not guilty of hypocrisy and secret sin. Not to love sin or allow ourselves in it, is with God not to sin at all (1 John iii. 6, 8, 9).

3. *God's eternity* (verse 5). "Are thy days as the days of man? Are thy years as man's days?" [God's eternity marked by "*years*" in contrast with man's days.] (Verse 6).—"That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin." Short-lived man requires haste to investigate and punish crime. His few years afford him but few opportunities of fully ascertaining character. The judge may die or the criminal escape. God's eternity excludes all need of haste, and secures all opportunity for knowledge. With God no need of torture to elicit confession. The severity, rapid succession, and long continuance of Job's afflictions, apparently inconsistent with this.

4. *His omnipotence* (verse 7). "Thou knowest (or, 'Although thou knowest;—*margin*,—'It is upon thy knowledge') that I am not wicked, and there is (or, 'and that there is') none that can deliver out of thine hand." No fear of a *rescue* on behalf of God's prisoners. Hence no need of vehement urgency in inflicting punishment. Solemn truth for the impenitent. "How shall we escape," &c? (Heb. ii. 3). "Consider this, ye that forget God," &c. (Ps. l. 22). Precious comfort for Christ's sheep. None able to pluck them out of his hand (John x. 29, 30).

5. *His relation to man as his Creator* (verse 8). "Thine hands have made me (or, 'elaborated me,'—*margin*, 'took pains with me'), and fashioned (—exquisitely moulded and adorned) me together round about (—every part of me); yet thou dost destroy me." Powerful plea. Workmen respect their own work. The more pains bestowed, the more regard will be shown. The heavens the work of God's *fingers*; man the work of his "hands." Man the most exquisite piece of Divine workmanship even in his body, still more in his soul, most of all in the union of both. The "human face Divine" an example of this exquisite moulding and adorning. The head apparently designed by nature as the cupola to the most glorious of her works [*Addison*]. Galen, the physician, converted

to the belief of a Divine Creator by the wisdom displayed in the structure of the human frame. Man God's glory as His work in creation; still more as His work in redemption (Is. xxix. 23; xlv. 11; lx. 21).

6. *Man's frailty and mortality* (verse 9). "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou (or, thou wilt) bring me unto dust again?" Reference to the Creation, and to the sentence pronounced on man at the Fall. Similar terms to those in Gen. ii. 7, and iii. 19. Written documents or traditionary records of the events probably then in existence, and afterwards employed by Moses. Man's frail and shortlived existence used by Job as a plea for milder treatment. Similar plea in Ps. lxxxix. 47. An availing one with God (Ps. ciii. 14; Gen. vi. 3). God's nature compassion. Our frailty pleads with God for forbearance, with man himself for earnestness (Eccles. ix. 10).

7. *God's kindness already manifested.* (1) In our *conception* (verse 10). "Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?" God the careful and beneficent Agent in our conception (Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16, Eccles. xi. 5). The process of nature in the womb His own, as instituted, sustained and controlled by Him. Milk coagulated into cheese an image of the formation of the embryo of the future man. (2) In the *growth of the fœtus* (verse 11). "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and fenced me with bones and sinews." The development of the embryo another of God's mysterious and beneficent operations. The order in the text that of Nature,—first the skin, then the flesh, lastly the harder parts gradually added. Among other important purposes, "bones and sinews" serve for protection to the more vital parts. (3) In the bestowment of *life* (verse 12). "Thou has granted me life." Life imparted to the embryo in the womb as a gift of God. Natural life a precious gift; how much more spiritual and eternal! That life also originally imparted to man, but lost in Adam (Rom. v. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 21). Restored in Christ who is the Life (John xiv. 6; xi. 25; 1 Cor. xv. 21; Rom. v. 17, 21; 1 John v. 11, 12. (4) In the *favour and kindness accompanying life.* "Life and favour." The kindness of God visible in every stage of our natural life. Conspicuous in infancy. "Cast upon him from the womb." Kindly watched over in a long-continued period of helplessness. Beneficent provision made in parental affection. Each individual the recipient of ten thousand mercies every day he lives. Divine goodness smiles on us in every sunbeam, and fans us in every breeze. (5) In the continued *preservation of life.* "And thy visitation (providential care) hath preserved my spirit." Natural life preserved by a careful and watchful Providence. The hand that put the heart in motion sustains its pulsations. Provides the means necesary for life's support. The petition answered even before it is offered—"Give us this day our daily bread." Protects life and organs from constantly surrounding dangers. An unseen hand averts a thousand accidents each day we live. The *mind* preserved from derangement and disease as well as the body. The same Divine care that protected the brain, the seat of life and thought, by a strong, spherical, bony skull, still continued in preserving the spirit. Sleep, as needful for the mind as the body, the daily gift of a beneficent Providence.—An object of so much regard not likely to be soon despised or lightly cast away. Neither natural nor becoming for so much kindness to terminate in cruelty.

IV. Complaints against God and His procedure (verses 13—18).

1. *That his sufferings were in God's secret purpose amidst all His past kindness* (verse 13). "And these things hast thou hid in thine heart; I know that this is with thee." The comfort of believers that all events in our lot are part of God's secret counsel (Ps. cxxxix. 16; Eccles. iii. 14). A truth of natural religion that what God does in time He purposed in eternity (Acts xv. 18). Necessary and desirable in a Being infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; omnipresent, omniscient, and almighty; holy, wise, and good. Job's predetermined afflictions in *his* view an apparent contradiction to God's former kindness. Life seemed given only to make him miserable. Such ungenerous thoughts his own infirmity. God neither fickle nor cruel. All things made, according to His purpose, to work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. viii. 28). Predestined sufferings no contradiction to experienced kindness. Joseph's imprisonment under a false abominable charge was in God's secret counsel while delivering him from the pit and placing him in Potiphar's palace. Observe—(1) *The nature of the flesh is to put a wrong construction upon God's dealings.* (2) *The object of Satan is to misrepresent God, as arbitrary, cruel and tyrannical.* (3) *Hard thoughts of God a special temptation in time of trouble.*

2. *Complains of God's excessive strictness in marking and punishing offences* (verse 14). "If I sin (rather, 'have sinned'), then Thou markest (or hast marked) me, and Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity." This perhaps the secret counsel complained of in preceding verse. In ignorance Job views his afflictions as the effect of God's strictness in

marking his sin. As yet no frank and humble confession. Observe—(1) *Sin often brought to mind in time of affliction.* (2) *As a fact, the sins of God's children often visited when those of others are not so.* (3) *The views of the flesh in regard to God always perverted.* According to the flesh, God is either—(1) Indifferent to men's conduct; soft and indulgent to their sins; or (2) Stern and inexorable; strict in marking and punishing every offence. (4) *In a believer, the flesh speaks at one time, and the spirit at another.* Job's present language uttered under the influence of the flesh and the promptings of Satan. Yet, in itself, in a certain sense true, as (1) *Men's sins are observed and marked by God.* Men judged at last "out of those things which are written in the books." For every idle word account to be given in the day of judgment. Men receive according to the things done in the body—good or bad. The secrets of men to be one day judged by Jesus Christ (Rom. ii. 16). Every evil work and secret thing to be brought into judgment. (2) *The guilty by no means acquitted by God.* Yet *sin is forgiven and the guilty are pardoned.* The gracious provision of the scheme of Redemption. *Through the substitution and satisfaction of Christ, God can punish and yet pardon.* God a just God and yet a Saviour; just and the justifier of the ungodly that believe in Jesus. Millions of sins forgiven, yet not one unpunished. The iniquities of men laid on the one righteous man, Christ Jesus. The Just One "bruised and put to grief" as a sacrifice for the sins of the unjust. The guiltless takes the place of the guilty, and the guilty that of the guiltless (2 Cor. v. 21). The blood of Jesus able to cleanse from all sin, because the blood of God's Son (1 John i. 7). Every sin marked against the sinner answered and atoned for by the Surety. The only thing now required for the sinner's pardon is his humble and hearty acceptance of the Substitute. God is satisfied with the Surety. It only remains that the sinner be so too. Confessing his guilt and accepting the Substitute, he is at once forgiven (1 John i. 9). Observe—(1) *The peculiarity of the Gospel age is that its provision is revealed with a clearness and fulness before unknown.* (2) *The Gospel a blessed contradiction to the latter part of Job's present utterance.* The *Law* declares, God cannot and will not acquit the guilty; the *Gospel* points to Calvary and says, the guiltless One became the guilty and suffered the penalty. (3) *The sinner who refuses the Surety retains his guilt, and suffers himself the punishment of it.*

3. *Complains of being treated as he is though a righteous man* (verse 15). "If I be wicked (—sin deliberately; or, 'be guilty') woe unto me: if I be righteous, yet will I (or may I) not lift up my head." A dictate of natural religion that the guilty transgressor must be punished. "This man is a murderer whom vengeance suffereth not to live" (Acts xxviii. 4). Also the teaching of nature that the just man may lift up his head with confidence and joy. "Be just, and fear not." None, however, *in himself*, able to do this *before God.* The most upright still guilty in God's sight. Standing *righteous in Christ*, a man lifts up his head before God. Job unable at present to do this—(1) As not realizing his standing in the Surety; (2) Keeping his eyes on his affliction; (3) His sufferings, according to the popular view, seemed to proclaim him a guilty man. —"I am full (or, 'being full') of confusion (reproach or ignominy); therefore see thou (or, 'seeing as I do') mine affliction." Job's other trials greatly aggravated by reproaches from his friends. Confusion, perplexity and shame, natural results of his affliction, especially in the time in which he lived. A natural tendency to judge of a man from his circumstances. An aggravation to a good man's sufferings, that himself and religion are misjudged from them. Hence Paul's anxiety in regard to his sufferings as an apostle (Eph. iii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 8). Himself not ashamed of them (2 Tim. i. 12).

4. *Complains that his sufferings only increased in number and intensity.* Three trying circumstances in Job's afflictions. (1) Their *continual increase* from the commencement (verse 16). "For it increaseth" (rears itself up like a swelling wave; or, "should it [my head] lift itself up"). Terrible climax in Job's sufferings. Commenced with loss of oxen and asses, and increased to extreme bodily affliction, inward darkness, and apprehension of Divine wrath. Probably his disease itself increased in violence as it continued. (2) Their *intensity.* "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou showest thyself marvellous upon me?" God's purpose seemed to be to hunt him down as a dangerous animal; or as if He Himself were a fierce lion intent on tearing him to pieces, as Is. xxxviii. 13; Hos. v. 14, xiii. 7; Ps. l. 22. His afflictions appeared like a display of what God could inflict. His plagues made wonderful (Deut. xxviii. 59). (3) Their *variety* and *constant change* (verse 17). "Thou renewest thy witnesses (or, 'weapons;' *margin*, 'plagues') against me; and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war (or, 'successions and a host,' *i.e.*, one host succeeding another) are against me." God appeared to be employing all his weapons against him, each attack a fresh "witness" produced to confront and confound him as a guilty man. One troop of troubles seemed only to succeed another, equally bent on his

destruction. Observe—(1.) *A child of God views all his troubles as from the Divine hand.* (2.) *This often an exaggeration rather than an alleviation of them.* (3.) *A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (4.) *Blessed to have God for a friend, terrible to have him for an enemy.* (5.) *Believers not to be staggered at the heaviest troubles succeeding each other.* (6.) *No troubles to a believer but what a Father's love permits and a Father's hand metes out.*

V. A piteous lament (verses 18—22) Embraces—

1. *A regret that he had ever been born, or permitted to live* (verses 18, 19). "Wherefore then hast Thou brought me out of the womb? O that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave." The feeling and thoughts of his first outburst return upon him (ch. iii. 10—16). An advance in the complaint; his birth directly ascribed to God, and charged upon him as an evil. The idea of God extracting the infant from the womb familiar in the Psalms, as Ps. xxii. 9; lxxi. 6. With David a matter of praise; with Job one of regret. *Unbelief and passion cast reproach on the Author both of our being and our well-being.* Job has long ago regretted the blindness and haste which dictated these irreverent and ungrateful words.

2. *An impassioned request for a short relief from suffering, on the grounds of his speedy departure* (verse 20). "Are not my days few? Cease then, and let me alone; that I may take comfort (brighten up, as ch. ix. 27) a little before I go." Same sentiment in the conclusion of his reply to Eliphaz (ch. vii. 19, 21). Observe—(1) *A saint, though sad and sinning, cannot be restrained from praying.* The flesh only lifts up its voice when that of the spirit is silent. The boon of a short relief testifies the depth of Job's distress. (2) *Brief respite in suffering a mercy to the sufferer.* Enables him—(i.) To rally his strength; (ii.) To collect his thoughts; (iii.) To recover calmness; (iv.) To prepare himself for further suffering. (3) *Terrible doom of the lost, which admits of no such respite* (Luke xvi. 24; Mark ix. 44; Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

3. *Gloomy description of the*

State of the Dead

as viewed by Old Testament saints (verses 21, 22).

1. A place of *perpetual exile* (verses 21). "I go whence I shall not return; a land," &c. Viewed as a land or country: its inhabitants the shades or spirits of deceased men. Hence the sublime description in Is. xiv. 9, 10; Ez. xxxii. 21. A land from which is no return to the present world.

2. A place *without attraction.* Return from it to the present world desirable, but not practicable. Much inferior to the present life for enjoyment. Banishment to it an evil. Hence Hezekiah's sorrow and regret at the prospect of having so soon to enter it (Is. xxxviii. 3—18).

3. A place of *confusion and disorder* (verse 22). "Without any order." (1) No distinction of classes, as on earth. [Hence David's prayer, Ps. xxvi. 9.] A place of indiscriminate gathering (1 Sam. xxviii. 19). (2) No pleasing vicissitude of day and night, summer and winter. (3) No beauty or orderly arrangement. Chaotic confusion, as on the earth before the six day's creation (Gen. i. 2). (4) No exercise of religious worship. No praise or thanksgiving. This part of the prospect especially deplored by the godly (Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10—12; cxv. 17; Is. xxxviii. 18).

4. A place of *darkness and gloom* (verse 21). "The land of darkness and the shadow of death," &c. A funeral pall of midnight darkness ever resting on it. Any light that penetrates it only darkness,—"The light is as darkness." The view probably borrowed from the places of Oriental sepulture, subterranean grottoes. The darkness of these sepulchral chambers transferred to the spirit-world. The experience of the disembodied spirit supposed to bear affinity to the circumstances of the body. The Sun of righteousness had not yet irradiated the world beyond the grave. The Forerunner in human nature had not yet entered within the veil. A blissful Paradise, as a home for the disembodied just, not yet known. The doctrine of a happy intermediate state reserved for the teaching of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Perhaps the enjoyment of it reserved for the time when He Himself should return to glory, having finished the work of our Redemption (Luke xxiii. 43). It was left for Jesus to dispel the darkness that brooded over the spirit-world, and show beyond the grave the hills of celestial bliss. Life and immortality brought to light by Jesus Christ through the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). Jesus carried light into the darksome grave and world beyond—(1) By His teachings (Luke xvi. 22; xxiii. 43; John xiv. 2). (2) By His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. By His lying in the grave He has left there a perpetual light for the comfort of all His dying people [*Caryl*]. *Blessed contrast between the prospect of death to believers now, and that to those of Old Testament times.* The kingdom of heaven with all

its glory and beauty, its joy and song, its inhabitants and employments, opened to believers by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of the dreary and confused abode of half-conscious spirits, the world beyond is now the believer's bright and happy home in his Father's house. Jesus has taught believers joyously to sing on the bed of death, as well as amid the enjoyments of life: "Yonder's my house and portion fair," &c. Hence a threefold duty lying on New Testament believers:—(1) Thankfulness; (2) Joyfulness; (3) Heavenly-mindedness.

CHAPTER XI.

FIRST SPEECH OF ZOPHAR.

Zophar follows in the same train with his companions. Misled by the same false principle—great sufferings prove great sins—he acts the part, not of a comforter, but of a reprover and an exhorter.

I. His reason for speaking (verses 2—4).

"Should not the multitude of words be answered?" &c. His reason involves Job's censure. Bitterly reproves him—(1) As a *mere talker* (verse 2). "Should a man full of talk be justified?" (2) As a *vain and lying boaster* (verse 3). "Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" (3) *As a proud despiser of others*; "When thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?" (4) As a *self-righteous pretender to perfection*, both in his principle and his practice (verse 4). "For thou hast said, my doctrine (speech, teaching, principles) is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes." Observe—(1) *Even good men can speak and act towards others like the carnal and unconverted.* (2) *Religious professors very often misunderstand and misjudge God's tried people.* (3) *Believers' greatest trials sometimes from their own brethren in the faith.* Christ a *merciful* as well as *faithful* High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15).

II. Zophar desiderates Divine teaching for Job's conviction (verse 5).

"But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee!" God speaks with a strong hand (Is. viii. 11). "None teacheth like Him." Such teaching needed alike by saint and sinner. Necessary—(1) for conviction; (2) for consolation. Divine teaching imparts—(1) the knowledge of ourselves; (2) the knowledge of God. God opens his lips—(1) "*against*" the sinner, for his conviction; (2) *for* him, for his consolation. "Spake in time past to the fathers in divers manners." Speaks now—(1) In His Word; (2) By His Spirit. The Spirit's office to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John xvi. 8). The Word of God sharper than any two-edged sword—a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Its office to pierce, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow (Heb. iv. 12).—Two things desired as the result of Divine teaching in Job's case; both important for shutting the mouths of complainers against God:—

1. *The discovery of God's transcendent and unsearchable wisdom* (verse 6). "That he would shew thee the secrets (hidden depths) of wisdom, that they are double to that which is" (or, "for they are manifold," or "there are doublings,"—complications or intricacies —"in his understanding").—*All complaints against the Divine procedure and our own lot proceed from ignorance of God's designs.* "What I do thou knowest not now." God's judgments a great deep. His way in the sea. "Depth of riches," both in "the wisdom and knowledge of God." His ways past finding out, yet all just and true. God not to be traced but trusted. "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense," &c.

2. *The discovery of Job's own sinfulness as much greater than his sufferings.* "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (or "consigns to oblivion in thy favour," or "remits to thee [a part] of thy iniquity," or "punishment"). True, even in Job's case, on *the supposition that his sufferings were the punishment of his sins.* Any affliction in this life only a part of what all sin deserves. *The rich man in torments probably no worse than his neighbours* (Luke xvi. 19—23). His sin not even mentioned by the Saviour. Probably only *worldliness and self-indulgence*, with its natural consequence, *heedlessness of the wants and woes of others.* His belly and the world his God. To offend in one point of God's law makes a man guilty of all. Sin, knowingly committed, nothing less than *rebellion against God*; causeless anger and hatred against another, equivalent in God's sight to *murder*. Equally subjects a man to the penalty of hell-fire (Matt. v. 22; 1 John iii. 15). Covetousness a species of idolatry (Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5). Earth a place of mercy and forbearance. The full punishment of sin reserved for another state.

III. Zophar chides Job's presumption, and enlarges on the unsearchableness of the Almighty (verses 7—9).

"Canst thou by searching find out God" (or, "wilt thou find out the search," or "deep wisdom" of God?) Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection (or "wilt thou find out perfectly," or "penetrate to the perfection of the Almighty?") It is as high as heaven (*margin*, "the heights of heaven"); what canst thou do [in attaining to it, viz., the deep wisdom or perfection of the Almighty]; deeper than hell (Sheol, or Hades, the invisible spirit-world, supposed to be in the lower parts of the earth), what canst thou know? (or how wilt thou understand it?) The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." Poetical description of the Divine wisdom and knowledge, and in general of

The Unsearchableness of God.

God unsearchable to finite creatures—

1. In His *Person*. His Nature or Essence beyond creature ken. As easy for an insect to comprehend man's nature as for man to comprehend his Creator's. The more the Grecian sage studied the question, what is God? the more he felt himself lost in it. Hence the altar of Athens with the inscription: To the Unknown God. In God is both "that which may be known," and which may *not* be known (Rom. i. 19). *That* He is, and *what* He is, may be known; *how* He is, and *how far* He is, is beyond a creature's capacity to know. God capable of being *apprehended*, but not of being *comprehended*. A little child may *apprehend* God; a seraph cannot *comprehend* Him. God is incomprehensible in His mode of being as the *One God;* still more as the *Three in One*. To know *that* God is and *what* He is, necessary for an intelligent creature's *happiness*: to know *how* He is, were it possible, could only gratify his *curiosity*. God only known as He is pleased to reveal Himself. Reveals Himself—(1) In His works; (2) In the human consciousness; (3) In His word; (4) Most of all in His Son Jesus Christ. Christ the image of the invisible God; He that hath seen *Him* hath seen the Father (Col. i. 15; John xiv. 9). The incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ,—the final, full and authentic exhibition of the Divine character and perfections. Eternal life, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent (John xvii. 3).

2. His *Perfections*. God's Perfections or Attributes are—(1) *Natural* or essential, as His Omniscience and Omnipotence; (2) *Moral*, as His justice and goodness. God unsearchable in both kinds. The universe a theatre for the display of His perfections. A God everywhere present, and everywhere working,—sustaining the vibrations of an animalcule and the revolutions of a planet; watching over a sparrow, and giving orders to an archangel; and doing all in infinite wisdom, and justice, and goodness,—may well be unsearchable.

3. In His *Purposes*. The history of the world and of the universe, as well as of each individual, the evolution of these purposes (Acts xv. 18; ii. 23). His purposes unsearchable (Rom. xi. 33; Ps. xcii. 5). "Deep in unfathomable mines," &c.

4. In His *Performances*. God unsearchable in His works of creation. Examples: The contents of a drop of stagnant water, as examined with a microscope; the starry heavens, as seen through Lord Rosse's telescope. Modern astronomy gives a meaning to the "heights of heaven" undreamt of in the days of Zophar. Geology, on the other hand, reveals displays of Divine power and wisdom in extinct worlds or creations far beneath our feet.

5. In His *Procedure*. God's dealings in providence both in regard to angels and men, the human race and the individuals composing it, unsearchable. Evil permitted in His own universe. The incarnation and death of His own Son an atonement for it. Man the object of that merciful provision; sinning angels excluded from its benefit.

Lessons from the unsearchableness of God:—

1. *Modesty and humility* in judging of God's person or perfections, His works or His ways.

2. *Submission to His will*, and acquiescence in His providence.

3. *Implicit trust* in His wisdom and goodness.

4. *Reverential, loving, and admiring adoration*. The result of the contemplation of God's works and ways in the apostle (Rom. xi. 33—36), and in the glorified in heaven (Rev. xv. 3, 4).

IV. Adduces God's resistless power and all-seeing eye as arguments to move Job to repentance (verse 10—18).

1. His *Almighty power* (verse 10). "If He cut off" (*margin*, "make a change," as He has done in Job and his family; or, "if He seize" as a criminal, as He has done in Job's case), and shut up (as in prison; or, "deliver over," *i.e.*, to an officer for trial), or gather together (an assembly or court to try the criminal)—who can hinder him? (*margin*, "turn him away.") Awful picture of a sinner arrested by Divine justice. A sinner in the hands of an angry God! Escape or rescue equally impossible. The only hope

of safety for a sinner lies in submission. Same sentiment uttered by Job himself (ch. ix. 4, 12, 13). Argument used by God (Ps. l. 22); by Jesus (Matt. v. 25, 26); by the Apostle (Heb. ii. 3; x. 31).

2. His *Omniscience* (ver. 12). "For He knoweth vain men; He seeth wickedness also; will He not then consider it?" Another weighty argument for a sinner's repentance. To elude God's eye as impossible as to escape from His hand. "No darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." "All things naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Further considerations, however, necessary to bring a sinner to repentance. Felix "trembled," and said to the preacher: "Go thy way for this time." Only the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ able to soften and subdue the sinner's heart. As addressed to Job, these arguments were — (1) Inapplicable; Job not the sinner Zophar supposed. (2) Useless; Job probably more keenly sensible of these truths than Zophar himself. Arguments, in order to move and benefit, need to be not only *sound and solemn*, but *suitable and seasonable.—One important part of a preacher's duty to consider the character and condition of those whom he addresses.*—Zophar's *application of the foregoing arguments* (verse 12). "For vain man would be wise (or 'but let a vain, or empty, hollow-headed man become wise') though man be born as the wild ass's colt," (or, "and let the wild ass's colt be born a man"). The latter part of the verse, as thus read, an Arab proverb. "Wild ass," used by the Arabs as a term of reproach. Probably the whole a proverbial maxim of the ancients. Apparently an exhortation rather than a statement. Contains truth in reference to man in general.

1. *Man left to himself, ever since the fall, is "vain."* Empty of real goodness and sound spiritual understanding. "There is none that understandeth; there is none that doeth good." Even the sages of antiquity "professing themselves wise became fools" (Rom. i. 22).

2. *Man is now by nature froward and self-willed "as a wild ass's colt."* Like that animal, man's disposition is to be free and uncontrolled. The child, like the man, wishes to be its own master. "Our lips are our own. Who is lord over us?" "Who is the Lord, that I should serve Him?" "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Frowardness, self-will, and intractableness, God's frequent complaints against Israel. "All day long have I stretched out my hand towards a disobedient and gainsaying people." "The heart of man fully set in them to do evil." "Madness in men's hearts while they live." The constant tendency of man's fallen nature to break loose from the restraints of Divine authority. Apart from grace, man, after his hardness and impenitent heart, treasures up wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. ii. 5).

3. *A change of character and disposition necessary in order to man's well-being either here or hereafter.* The vain man must become wise. The wild ass's colt—froward, self-willed, independent—must become a man, thoughtful, submissive, obedient. The second part of Christ's call in the Gospel: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi. 29).

4. *Such a change nothing less than a new birth.* The wild ass's colt must be "born" in order to become a man. A new birth necessary to froward, self-willed, independent man, in order to his entering the kingdom of God, whether on earth or in heaven. The teaching of Jesus (John iii. 7). The promise (Ez. xxxvi. 26). The prayer (Ps. li. 10). The experience of it (Tit. iii. 5). The exhortation, as addressed to Job, was—(1) *Inapplicable.* Job neither a fool nor, except perhaps in his trouble, especially when worried by his friends, a wild ass's colt. (2). *Uncharitable*, because inappropriate. "Charity thinketh no evil; hopeth all things." (3). *Rude.* No part of wisdom in a preacher or monitor to apply harsh terms and ill names, even indirectly. "Be courteous." Hearers neither to be flattered on the one hand nor libelled on the other. (4). *Unfeeling.* No consideration made of Job's intense sufferings and accumulated trials. Zophar pours vinegar instead of oil on Job's wounded spirit. Sympathy in a preacher necessary to success. Want of sympathy argues want of sense.

V. Persuasion to repentance, on the ground of personal advantage (verse 13, —20).

The whole passage a noble strain of moral Oriental poetry. Perhaps quoted from the ancients by Zophar, from its supposed applicability to Job's case. Exhibits the views prevalent at the period. The teaching that of the Old Testament or pre-Evangelical platform. Holds forth more especially the promise of earthly comfort and prosperity as the result of repentance and piety. Similar sentiments expressed by Eliphaz (ch. v. 8, 17—26); and by Bildad (ch. viii. 5—7). Frequent in the Psalms and Proverbs; as Psalms i., xxxvii. and cxxviii.; Prov. iii., iv., and viii. In order to personal profit, the passage to be read in the light of New Testament truth. *The lamp of the New*

Testament to be carried with us in exploring the dark chambers of the Old. In the New Testament, the promises of future good are mainly connected with the Lord's second appearing (Acts iii. 19—21; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10; Tit. ii. 11—13). The posture of New Testament believers that of "strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" the object of their desires and affections, the "things that are above;" their spirit, contentment with "such things as they have" (Heb. xiii. 5, 14; 1 Pet. ii. 11; Col. iii. 1, 2; 2 Tim. iv. 8). The passage contains—

1. *The terms proposed, or the duty recommended* (verse 13, 14). The condition a true turning to God. Three steps indicated—

(1). *A preparation or right disposition of the heart* (verse 13). "If thou prepare (or set right) thine heart." Always represented as the first step in seeking God (1 Sam. vii. 3; 2 Chron. xix. 3; xxx. 19; Ezra, vii. 10; Ps. lxxviii. 8, 37). Implies—(*a*) Serious consideration; (*b*) Firm purpose; (*c*) Suitable frame and disposition; (*d*) Removal of secret sin. The heart naturally *biassed*, and needs to be made *straight*; unstable, and needs to be made *steadfast*. Sincerity and earnestness essential in seeking God.

(2). *Earnest prayer.* "If thou stretch forth thine hands towards Him." A common attitude in Old Testament devotion (Ps. lviii. 9; cxiii. 6; Is. i. 15). Examples: Moses (Ex. ix. 33); Ezra (ix. 5); Solomon (1 Kings viii. 22). Includes—(*a*) Confession of sin; (*b*) Supplication for mercy.

(3). *Amendment of life* (verse 14). "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles" (or tents,—Arab chiefs required more than one for their household;—wickedness—not to be allowed in any of them. Several copies and ancient versions, however, read the word in the singular). Sin to be put away both from our persons and our premises. "Iniquity,"—injustice or wrongdoing not to remain in our *hand*; "wickedness,"—any kind of open sin—not to remain in our *house*. Zacchæus an example of the first (Luke xix. 8); David of the second (Ps. ci. 7). A man is greatly responsible for what is done in his household. Domestic, as well as personal sins, to be looked after and put away. The commendation of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 19); The neglect of Eli (1 Sam. ii. 12, 17; iii. 11, 14); The resolution of David (Ps. ci. 2, 7). Observe—(1) A striking gradation in the putting away of sin;—from the *heart*, from the *hand*, from the *house*. (2) True religion begins with the *heart*, and ends with the *life*. (3) Sin not only to be put away, but "far away." Present impressions not to be trusted. All occasions and temptations to relapses to be avoided.

2. *The promises annexed* (verse 15—19). The promises suppose pardon and acceptance of the penitent, with his consciousness of it. This promised in the Old as well as in the New Testament, upon sincere confession and repentance, with faith in the Sacrifice (See Ps. xxxii. 1, 5; Prov. xxviii. 13; Is. i. 17; lv. 6, 7.) The promises here are—

(1.) A *cheerful confidence before God and men* (verse 15). "Thou shalt lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear." Sense of pardon gives serenity of aspect. A purged conscience makes an uplifted countenance. "Without spot,"—either of guilt or its consequences. A face unabashed by guilt or shame, unsullied by grief or tears. Spots on the conscience transfer themselves to the countenance. Spots of *guilt* removed by the sprinkled blood; spots of *grief* by the consciousness of it. Conscious guilt makes the countenance to fall; sense of pardon and acceptance lifts it up (Gen. iv. 5, 6; Luke xviii. 13; 1 John iii. 21.) The face sooner and better lifted up by *pardon* than by *prosperity*.

(2.) *Deliverance from present suffering* (verse 16). "Thou shalt forget thy misery and remember it as waters that pass (or, have passed) away." Inward, if not outward misery, removed by sense of pardoning mercy (Ps. xxxii. 1, 5; li. 8—14). Inward suffering sooner or later the fruit of sin. The remembrance of previous sorrow swallowed up by present joy. Trouble forgotten through long continued triumph. Remembrance of grief often only an enhancement of joy. No trace left of the winter-torrent that has passed away. "Your joy no man taketh from you." The desolating flood that has disappeared only remembered with thankful joy. So the pardoned soul has still in remembrance, "the wormwood and the gall."

(3.) *Abiding peace and joy* (verse 17). "Thine age shall be clearer than the noonday (or, "a period, or happy age, shall arise to thee, brighter than, &c."); and thou (or it) shalt shine forth, thou (or it) shalt be as the morning" (or, "now thou art in darkness, but then thou shalt be as the morning"). Light out of darkness, the experience of a penitent and pardoned soul (Hos. vi. 3). The light and joy of acceptance like "the noonday" for brightness; like "the morning" for increase. "The path of the just," the justified and sanctified in Christ, a light increasing in brightness "unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). The believer's joy not diminished by manifold trials (1 Peter, i. 6). Like oil poured on water, comes always to the surface. At times unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter i. 8).

(4.) *Safety and security* (verse 18, 19). "Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope;

yea, thou shalt dig about thee (making preparation, according to patriarchal custom, for a new abode; or, 'now thou art ashamed but then, &c.'), and thou shalt take thy rest in safety; also, thou shalt lie down (as a shepherd with his flock), and none shall make thee afraid." Hope in God's mercy through Christ, the only foundation of real security. Divine protection one of the sweetest of new covenant blessings. Christ's sheep safe in His hands and in those of His Father (John x. 28, 30). "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Preservation of the soul an Old as well as New Testament promise (Ps. cxxi. 7). Oriental tents and travellers exposed to danger from robbers, wild beasts, and reptiles; believers' souls exposed to no less peril (Col. ii. 8, 18; 1 Peter v. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 3).

5. *Influence among men* (verse 19). "Many shall make suit to thee." The mark of a great, if not a good man. "Many entreat the favour of the prince" (Prov. xix. 6). The same promised to the Church or Bride of Christ (Ps. xlv. 12). So Abimelech made suit to Abraham, entreating his favour and alliance (Gen. xxvi. 26—29. Pardoned people are praying people; and praying people are Israels,—princes that have power both with God and men (Gen. xxxii. 28). God's presence with a believer the ground of true greatness. He that has power with God likely to have influence among men. "We will go with you for we have heard that God is with you (Zech. viii. 23). Believers are kings and priests to God. Their duty so to walk as to gain respect to their profession. An ill sign with a professor when nobody seeks the favour of his prayers. A believer's privilege so to carry Christ about with him that men shall feel his influence, as those who sought only to be in Peter's shadow. The true character of a pardoned and accepted person is to have so much of Christ's loving spirit as to carry with him a constant benefaction. Made sweet and gracious by God's favour *on* them, and His spirit *in* them, believers carry with them the unconscious influence of a sweet and gracious atmosphere. A pardoned man, walking with Christ and imbibing His spirit, as sure to be perceived as a bag that carries sweet perfume. The privilege and duty of believers to exhale so much of Christ's loving nature as, like modest and half-hidden violets, to attract others to them by their fragrance. This, as well as the other promises, realised in Job's after experience, but not in the way imagined by Zophar (ch. xlii. 7—9).

VI. The contrasted case of the ungodly (verse 20) Includes—(1) "*Anxiety and disappointment.* "The eyes of the wicked shall fail,"—anxiously looking in vain for the possession of good and deliverance from evil. A time when it is too late to knock even at mercy's door. "They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me (Prov. i. 28. (2) *Perplexity and hopelessness.* "They shall not escape." (*Heb.* "Refuge has perished from them"). Calamity, sooner or later, overtakes the Christless and impenitent, from which escape is impossible. "Because I called and ye refused,—I also will laugh at your calamity" (Prov. i. 24—26). "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3; x. 26, 27). (3) *Ruin and despair.* "Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost" (*margin*, "as a puff of breath"). The hope of the impenitent and Christless proves as vain and unsubstantial as a puff of breath. Their expectation terminates with their life. Having chosen death rather than life, they obtain their choice. "All they that hate me love death." (Prov. viii. 36.)

CHAPTER XII.

JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR.

I. Defends himself against the charge of ignorance implied in Zophar's speech (verse 2, 3).

His defence is:—

1. *Ironical* (verse 2). "No doubt but ye are the people; and wisdom shall die with you;" the wisdom of mankind is collected in your person, and when you die wisdom must perish at the same time. Times when it may be proper to use the language of irony and sarcasm. Its proper use to put error and pretension to shame. So Elijah to the worshippers of Baal: "Cry aloud for he is a God;" and Paul to the Corinthians: "Ye are rich; ye have reigned as kings without us" (1 Cor. iv. 8). Assumption on the part of preachers and monitors sure to render their words powerless and themselves ridiculous.

2. *Serious* (verse 3). "But I have understanding as well as you: I am not inferior to you." Times when modesty does not forbid a man to speak in his own commendation. Allowable when for our own defence,

or for the interests of truth. Paul compelled by his detractors to this "foolishness of boasting" (2 Cor. xii. 11). A man's duty to *know himself;* and especially to know whether he has "understanding" to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, which is life eternal" (2 Cor. xiii. 5; 1 John v. 20; John xvii. 3).

3. *Contemptuous.* "Yea, who knoweth not such things as these" (*margin*, "with whom are not such things as these?"). Conceit and pretension to be taken down. Zophar's vaunted wisdom was after all—(1) *Commonplace.* His speech mostly such moral and religious sentiments as were found in everybody's mouth. (2) *Borrowed;* second-hand maxims handed down from the fathers. Preachers to be careful—(1) Not to deal in mere commonplace sentiments, or to ring changes on a few universally admitted truths. Hearers to be taught something which they do not already know. The instructed scribe to "bring out of his treasure things new and old." Necessary to present new truths, or old ones in a new, clearer, or more impressive light. (2) Not to parade before others what is not really their own, without acknowledging it. False prophets reproved for stealing God's words, "every one from his neighbour," and passing them off as if delivered to themselves (Jer. xxiii. 30).

II. Complains of his being treated with scorn in consequence of affliction (verse 4).

"I am as one (or, 'I am one who is') mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God and he heareth him (or, 'that he may answer him;' or, 'and let him answer him;' possibly the taunt of his enemies, as Ps. xxii. 8; Matthew xxvii. 43); the just upright man is laughed to scorn." This treatment, according to the ordinary way of the world (ver. 5). "He that is ready to slip with his feet is a lamp despised (or a torch thrown away as useless) in the thought of him that is at ease" (or, "contempt adheres to calamity in the mind of the prosperous and secure, ready for those who slip with their feet"—who are tottering, or already fallen into adversity and trouble). Probably one of the proverbial maxims referred to in verse 3, quoted by Job on *his* side of the question, and as descriptive of his own case.

1. He was *mocked.* No small aggravation of his affliction (ch. xvi. 10, 20; xvii. 2, 6; xxi. 3; xxx. 1, 9, 10). The experience of David (Ps. xxii. 7; xxxv. 16; lxix. 11, 12; and of David's Lord (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; xxvii. 27—31; Luke, xxiii. 35). Mockery worse to bear than open violence. The bitterness of this treatment enhanced by the previous experience of honour and respect (ch. xxix. 7—25). Believers not to be staggered at "cruel mockings," either from the world or nominal professors. Such mockery the expression of inward contempt,—"in the thought of him," &c. *The followers of a despised Christ to expect no better treatment than their Master* (Is. liii. 3; John xiii. 16).

2. Was mocked *in consequence of his affliction* (verse 5). An aggravation of the treatment. Affliction painful enough in itself, and demanding sympathy. Hard to endure, and cruel to inflict, mockery and contempt on account of it. This experience of Job also that of David, and of the great Antitype of both. *Christ was mocked by men when bruised by God.*

3. Job thus mocked *notwithstanding his uprightness and piety.* (1.) His *uprightness*,—"the just upright man." The testimony already given him by God (ch. i. 8; ii. 3). (2.) His *piety.* Manifested in his prayerfulness,—"who calleth upon God," &c. Exemplified in his conduct in reference to his children (ch. i. 5). His practice still in his affliction (ch. xvi. 20). Made at last an intercessor for his friends (ch. xlii. 8, 10). *A man of piety necessarily a man of prayer.* Affliction draws a good man nearer to God, sends a bad one farther from Him. Terrible aggravation of the sin when the mocked sufferer is an upright child of God. The tremendous guilt of the Jews in relation to Jesus. Job's prayers *ordinarily* heard and answered, though *apparently not so now.* So with Jesus in his last suffering (Ps. xxii. 2; Luke xxii, 42, compared with John xi. 42). Prayer, offered believingly in the name of Christ, heard and answered, though in God's own time and way. God's answer to believers' prayers his testimony to the acceptance of their persons.

4. Job was mocked *by those who were at ease themselves* (verse 5). Another aggravation of the sin as well as of the suffering occasioned by it. To be "at ease," a common description of the ungodly. Too often applicable even to the professors of religion (Amos vi. 1). Job's complaint that of Christ's suffering church (Ps. cxxiii. 3. 4). *Suffering in ourselves the parent of sympathy for others.*

III. Re-asserts the prosperity of the ungodly (verse 6).

"The tabernacles of robbers prosper; yea, they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly" (or, "to whom God bringeth with his hand," or, "to him who carrieth God in his hand"). Repeats more fully what he had asserted (ch. ix. 24). Perhaps quotes another maxim of the ancients. Observe—

1. The *characters spoken of.* (1) "Rob

bers." Reference to the ungodly who put might for right. The earth, previous to the flood, filled with violence by such. 'The giants in those days, mighty men of renown (Gen. vi. 4). The flood the consequence of their violence and its prosperity. A similar state of things not long after that event. Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord." Hence the war of the kings (Gen. xiv). The Sabeans and Chaldeans (ch. i15—17) other specimens of these "robbers." Lust for property, power and pleasure, the natural tendency of fallen men. Hence wars and fightings (Jam. iv. 1, 2). Tyrants, despots, and great conquerors, often only robbers on a large scale. Unlawful gains, oppression of the poor, and mercantile dishonesty, other forms of "robbery" (Jer. xxii. 13; Hab. ii. 12). (2) They "*provoke God to anger.*" The effect of all ungodliness. God angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and righteousness of men (Rom. i. 18). God's anger especially provoked by cruelty and wrong. The whole life of the ungodly a continued provocation of God. Wealth treasured up against the day of wrath (Rom. ii. 5). Patience no proof of the want of provocations.

2. *What is asserted of them.* They "prosper." The prosperity of the ungodly more fully enlarged upon (ch. xxi. 7—13). The stumbling-block of Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 2, 12); the perplexity of Jeremiah (Jer. xii. 1). (1) *Their dwellings are in outward peace and prosperity.* Their "tabernacles" prosper. A *cluster* of tents required to form an Oriental chieftain's household. The *families* of the ungodly appear to prosper (ch. xxi. 8, 9, 11). Full of children, and leaving the rest of their substance to their babes (Ps. xvii. 14). Their homes appear likely to stand for many generations. Their lands called by their own names (Ps. xlix. 11).—(2) They *enjoy abundance of earthly comforts.* Their abundance brought to them in the providence of God, though idolatrously ascribed to their own hand (Deut. viii. 17; Heb. i. 16). Observe—(i.) *Good fortune no proof of Divine favour.* Dives had his good things in this life, Lazarus his evil things. (ii.) *Earthly goods as well as trials at the Divine disposal.* These often mysteriously, always wisely, distributed. As compared with *spiritual blessings*, rather the husks that the swine eat, or the bones thrown to the dogs. Ordinarily given as incitements to repentance, gratitude, and love. When lusted after, often given in judgment rather than in mercy. The desire granted, while leanness is sent into the soul (Ps. cvi. 15).

IV. An Appeal to the irrational creation (verse 7—10).

"Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, &c. Who knoweth not in all these (or, 'which among all these knoweth not') that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" (that God—here alone in the dialogues spoken of as "the Lord"—is both Creator and Governor of all things). Perhaps a third proverbial maxim quoted by Job.—Observe:

1. *All animate and inanimate nature man's teachers.*

The Book of Nature.

Its lessons manifold both as to faith and practice. Job, in the end, referred to its teachings by God himself. Heaven and earth an open Bible, speaking both *from* God and *of* Him. The nocturnal sky a wide unfolded scroll, with every star a character. David's delight to spell in it the glory and perfections of God (Ps. xix. 1, 2). Every rising sun proclaims anew His goodness and faithfulness (Lam. iii. 23). Solomon sent his readers to the ants for a lesson of industry. Jesus directs His disciples to the birds and the flowers to learn implicit confidence in the care of their heavenly Father. The book of nature distinctly enough written, and the voices of creation sufficiently audible and clear. But sin has dimmed our spiritual vision, dulled our hearing, and made us slow to learn either about God or ourselves.

2. *The existence of an all-pervading, all-sustaining, and all-controlling*

Providence

Insisted on by Zophar as if Job had been ignorant of it. Declared by the dust on a butterfly's wing as well as by the lustre of the Dogstar. Proclaimed by the motion of an insect as it dances in the sun-beams, as well as by the rising and setting of sun, moon, and planets. The hand that upholds the sun in the heavens guides the sparrow in its fall to the ground. "Not a fly but has had infinite wisdom concerned, not only in its structure, but in its destination." [*Young*] Nature's works designed to lead up to nature's God.—"In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath (or spirit) of all mankind" (verse 10). All life in and from God. First created, and then supported and preserved by Him. "In Him we live," &c.,—not only *by* Him but *in* Him. The life of men, animals and plants, no longer continued than He pleases. The laws of existence established by Him, and still under His control. The spirit or thinking part of man as well as the soul or feeling part of animals, equally proceeding from and dependent upon Him. The highest creature no more able to prolong his existence a moment beyond His

will than to create a universe. The power of a man to *think*, as well as the sense to *feel*, and the muscles to *act*, alike from Him. A glance of His eye able to reduce creation to its original nothingness. All events under His control. Moral evil permitted, penal evil inflicted by Him. The twin truths of creation and providence everywhere taught by external nature. The truth that nature fails to teach, that which man most needs to learn. For man to learn the way of pardon and reconciliation with God, the volume of nature required to be supplemented by that of revelation.

V. The right and duty of exercising private judgment (verse 11).

"Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?" (or, "as the mouth tastes its food"). The office of the ear to try or judge of the statements submitted to it. The ear put for the judgment or reason which acts through it. Moral and religious truths at that time conveyed through the ear rather than the eye. Books or writings rarely, if ever, found among the people—*Men's duty to examine and judge of what they hear.* Applicable to the quotations already, or yet to be, made from the ancients by Job and his friends, as well as to the sentiments uttered by themselves. Job bespeaks candour and attention to his speeches, and resolves to judge for himself as to what is advanced by his friends. Observe, in reference to

Private judgment,

1. *Man possesses a faculty by which to judge of moral and religious statements.* Such a faculty distinguishes man from the brutes, and allies him to angels. The faculty of reason or judgment originally given and still continued to men, though weakened and depraved by sin. Appealed to by God in His messages to men (Isaiah v. 3); by Christ (Luke xii. 57); by His apostles (1 Cor. x. 15; xi. 13—14). Lies at the foundation of all efforts to instruct, enlighten, and persuade others in reference to religious subjects. Implies the possession and the apprehension of a standard of right and wrong. Its highest office to judge of moral and religious statements by that standard. A standard of moral judgment implanted in man's nature at his creation, but now much effaced. Renewed in the moral law and in the Scriptures in general. The object of the Bible and of the Holy Spirit to exhibit that standard, and to lead men to judge, conclude, and act according to it.

2. *Man's duty to exercise that faculty in regard to all statements on moral and religious subjects.* Appeal to the law and the testimony in reference to what man teaches, enjoined by God Himself (Is. viii. 20). Men commanded to cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge (Prov. xix. 27). The apostolic injunction—"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God" (1 Thes. v. 21; 1 John iv. 1). The part of the "simple" to "believe every word." The Bereæans commended for searching the Scriptures daily to see whether the things spoken by the apostles were according to them (Acts xvii. 11). Superstition and priestcraft deny to men the right of private judgment, and forbid the ear to do its office. To believe only because the Church or our forefathers have done so, is for the ear no longer to "try words." Man responsible to God for the right exercise of the judgment He has given him. When *God* speaks, the office of the judgment is to discover that He has done so, to ascertain *what* He has spoken, and then, unquestioningly, to accept it. God's announcements often *above* reason, never *contrary* to it. The judgment to be exercised on moral and religious subjects with—(1) Seriousness and attention; (2) Candour and patience; (3) Modesty and humility; (4) Impartiality and absence of prejudice; (5) Prayer for Divine enlightenment.

3. *Human authority on religious subjects to be respected, but not regarded as paramount* (verses 12, 13). "With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days is understanding. With Him (*i.e.* God) is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding,"—wisdom in both its forms, speculative and practical; or, wisdom to direct and strength to accomplish. The latter verse probably the commencement of another quotation. Job's object in it—(1) To vindicate his knowledge of God as not inferior to that of his friends; (2) To show that the wisdom of God infinitely surpasses that of the wisest of men. Human wisdom acquired by study, observation and experience,—by the long-continued exercise of the judgment referred to in verse 11. By reason of use men have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, and so become men of full age in understanding, instead of children (Heb. v. 13, 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 20). That wisdom always imperfect and fallible. God the only infallible teacher. Wisdom, *in* men, as something communicated; *with* God, as something eternally and essentially abiding. In man as a stream, limited and uncertain; with God, as a perennial fountain. An appeal, therefore, to be made from man's teaching to God's. Divine teaching to be implicitly submitted

to and confided in, as that of infinite wisdom.

VI. Spirited description of God's providence in the world (verse 14—25. Probably a quotation of ancient poetry, or the production of the poet put into Job's mouth. Properly commences with verse 13. A magnificent ode or hymn on the Divine perfections and procedure in the world. The similarity in language and sentiment to parts of 107th Psalm remarkable. Celebrates especially the various

Acts of Divine Providence.

Exhibits its operations on a grand and extensive scale. Represents God as ruling over nations as well as individuals. His Providence viewed more in its solemn and judicial aspects.

1. *In acts of destruction* (verse 14). "He breaketh down, and (or 'so that') it cannot be built again." The part of the Divine Ruler is to pull down as well as to build up—to kill as well as to make alive (Is. xlv. 7; Am. iii. 6; Deut. xxxii. 39). Breaks down houses, cities, individuals, families, nations—the earth itself. Seen in the Flood, the Cities of the Plain, perhaps the Tower of Babel. Breaks down cities, buildings, &c., by earthquakes, inundations, volcanoes, lightnings, tempests, &c; nations and kingdoms by invasions, wars, civil discord, foolish counsels, &c; individuals by diseases and misfortunes. Breaks down in various ways human schemes and enterprises (Gen. xi. 3—8; 2 Chr. xx. 36, 37). Reference to one form of destruction in verse 15. "He withholdeth the waters and they dry up; also he sendeth them out and they overturn the earth." Exemplified in the Deluge. The windows of heaven then opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up (Gen. vii. 11). Inundations frequent in Arabia and Egypt.

2. *In laying restraints on individuals.* "He shutteth up a man (*Heb.* 'over a man') and there is no opening." Reference to underground prisons (Jer. xxxviii. 6—13), God in His providence shuts up individuals as prisoners—by affliction and misfortune (Job himself an example); by delivering them up into the hand of enemies; by bringing them into difficulties and straits; by inward darkness and distress; by insanity, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. When God shuts up, none but Himself can open (Is. xxii. 22).

3. *In overruling both men's misery and mischief* (verse 16) "The deceived and the deceiver are His." The deceiver can only *act*, and the deceived *suffer*, by His permission. The *deceiver* His, to restrain his deception and employ it for His own wise purposes. The *deceived* His, to deliver him from the deception, or to correct or punish him by it. The deceiver God's instrument in trying the good and punishing the bad. Satan the deceiver of the nations (Rev. xx. 3). Lying spirits in the mouth of false prophets, God's instruments in punishing Ahab and his people (1 Kings xxii. 20). False Christs and false prophets to deceive many, but not the elect (Matt. xxiv. 11—24). Antichrist's advent to be with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those that receive not the love of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 10).

4. *In punishing nations and their rulers* (verse 17). "He leadeth councillors away spoiled (stripped as captives taken in war, or deprived of their dignity, or as persons bereft of judgment), and maketh the judges fools;" (—so infatuates them, that they shall give wrong judgment, and so bring the nation into trouble). So God threatened to take away from Judah the judge, and the prudent, and the councillor, and to give children to be their princes, and to cause babes to rule over them (Is. iii. 2—4). No greater woe to a land than when God in judgment gives it up to unwise rulers and statesmen (Ecc. x. 16).—Verse 18. "He looseth the bond of kings (dissolves their authority, as in the case of Rehoboam and the Ten Tribes), and girdeth their loins with a girdle" (perhaps a cord or rope, as indicative of servitude). No uncommon thing for despotic rulers to be dethroned by their oppressed and discontented subjects, and instead of the insignia of royalty to have to wear the habit of a prisoner or an exile (Jer. lii. 8—11, 31—33). Numerous examples in Europe within the last century. (Verse 24, 25). "He taketh away the heart (or understanding) of the chief of the people of the earth (or the land), and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way, &c." Easy with God in judgment on themselves or the nation, to leave rulers and statesmen in such perplexity as not to know what to do, and to abandon them to foolish and ruinous counsels. So Rehoboam adopted the unwise counsel given him by his youthful advisers. The result of such judicial infatuation seen in foolish and hurtful wars, in the adoption of unwise public measures, in the enactment of intolerant, partial, and unjust laws, and in a short-sighted reactionary policy after one of enlightened progress.

5. *In humbling the brave, the gifted, and the great* (verse 19). "He leadeth princes (or priests—probably civil rulers, viceroys, or ministers of state) away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty" (warriors mighty

in battle). No king saved by the multitude of a host. The battle is the Lord's, who gives the victory to whom He will. Threatened to take from Judah the mighty man and the man of war. At times turned the edge of Israel's sword, so that they could not stand in the battle (Ps. lxxxix. 43). Armies and their generals often overthrown when calculating on certain victory. God sometimes overthrows the mighty by allowing them to overthrow themselves through foolish and ambitious counsels. (Verse 20.)—"He removeth away the speech of the trusty (the eloquence of the patriotic orator), and taketh away the understanding of the aged" (the prudence and wisdom of the experienced senator). So God threatened to take away from Judah "the eloquent orator, the ancient and the honourable man" (Is. iii. 2, 3). May remove such by disease or death without supplying their places, by withholding the desire to serve their country with their gifts, or by withdrawing the gifts themselves. Persuasive eloquence and penetrating judgment not in men's own keeping. The influence of wise and confidential advisers sometimes destroyed to serve God's own purposes (2 Sam. xv. 31; xvii 14, 23).—Verse 21. "He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty." Numerous examples furnished by France and other European countries during the last hundred years.

6. *In disclosing hidden wickedness* (verse 22). "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death." (1) Wicked and deep-laid schemes. Examples: the diabolical contrivance of Haman for the destruction of the Jews (Book of Esther); the Gunpowder Plot for the overthrow of the Protestant religion in England. (2) Secret crimes long hidden from men. Examples: Joseph's brethren, Achan, David. The verse in this sense quoted by the Apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

7. *In the increase and decay of nation.* (verse 23). "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again." A nation sometimes made to rise within a short time to great power and influence. Examples: Rome; Israel under David and Solomon; and in more modern times, England, America, and Prussia. Examples of the decay of nations: Israel, after the death of Solomon; Rome, after the prevalence of luxury, pride and cruelty; Spain, after its persecution of the truth and exclusion of an open Bible. Changes in the condition of nations perhaps as early as the times of Job (Gen. xiv.). Egypt, a powerful monarchy at a very early period, ultimately for its idolatry, "the basest of kingdoms." The seven nations of Canaan extirpated for their wickedness and lust. Only a short period occupied by the rise and fall of each of the first three universal empires.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR—CONTINUED.

I. Job re-asserts his knowledge of the Divine procedure as not inferior to that of his friends (verse 1, 2).

"Lo, mine eye," &c. Right in certain circumstances to maintain one's own knowledge, but without vain glory (2 Cor. xi. 6; Eph. iii. 4). Three things suggested in the words of Job as necessary to the

Acquisition of knowledge.

1. *Observation.* "Mine eye hath seen all this." Important to make a right use of one's eyes. God's works both of creation and providence to be carefully observed. To observe God's works and ways is both a part of wisdom and the means of increasing it (Ps. cvii. 43). A mark of the ungodly and a cause of their destruction, not to regard the works of the Lord nor the operation of His hand (Ps. xxviii. 5; Is. v. 12). Often the best knowlege that which is obtained by careful personal observation. "Come and see," a common phrase in the Jewish schools, and frequently repeated in the New Testament (John i.; Rev. vi). Better to see for ourselves than to hear from others. The eyes, as well as the ears, are the purveyors for the mind.

2. *Attention to the instruction of others.* "Mine ear hath heard." Moral and religious instruction at that time mostly oral. Consisted mainly in the recitation of proverbial maxims or truths delivered in short sentences. Such frequently quoted by Job and his friends. Reference made here to such. Each individual's own personal observation necessarily limited. The testimony of others required to supplement our own observation. The privilege and duty of one to avail himself of the testimony and conclusions of another. Since the invention of printing, the extension of education, the employment of steam, and the removal of the taxes on knowledge,—the testimony and instruction of others now addressed nearly as much to the

eye as to the ear. Reading now greatly takes the place of hearing, as the means of obtaining knowledge.

3. *Reflection.* "Hath understood (or considered) it." Reflection an appropriating and assimilating process. Turns to account what is observed, read, or heard. Reading and hearing are with a view to reflection, as food is taken into the mouth only with a view to its being digested in the stomach. Food only serves the purpose of nutrition when properly masticated and digested. The eye and the ear collect the materials for the mind to work upon. Reading, as Bacon says, makes a full man; but reflection makes an intelligent, a growing, and a sure man. The want of consideration the characteristic of the way-side hearers. The reason of the Word of God, when heard, not entering the heart, and so of its being caught away by the enemy (Matt. xiii. 19).

II. His desire and resolution to address himself to God (verse 3).

"Surely, (or 'however') I would (or will) speak to the Almighty; and I desire to reason (or debate the case) with God." Observe—

1. *Great comfort to a believer in being able to take his case to God.* Many things may be poured into God's ear which may not be uttered to man's. Our comfort that in every controversy an appeal may be made from man to God. The heart in trouble eased by pouring itself out to our Father in heaven The best way to dispose of difficulties and perplexities is to take them at once to God. Better to take our case to God than to man, as—(1) He is better acquainted with it, and can make no mistake about it; (2) Will give a more just decision, being neither influenced by passion nor prejudice; (3) Will shew more tenderness and sympathy in dealing with it.

2. *God's great condescension in allowing a creature to reason with Him.* His desire that we should do so (Is. i. 18; xli. 21; xliii. 26). Our privilege to plead with Him, not to *justify ourselves as righteous*, but to *be justified by Him as sinners.* In the Gospel, God permits us to plead with Him for justification and acceptance on the ground of a better righteousness than our own. His invitation (Is. i. 18); David's resolution (Ps. lxxi. 16); Paul's triumph (Rom. viii. 33, 34).

III. Vehement retort from his friends (verse 4).

"But ye are forgers of lies (or, 'stitchers up of falsehood,' 'disappointing surgeons,' or 'framers of false arguments,'), ye are all physicians of no value" (or, 'of nothingness,' or 'idol physicians,' as Zech. xi. 17). They had come professedly to bind up their friend's wounds, and heal his diseased mind. In doing this they had only employed false and futile arguments. Had applied useless remedies, and misapplied good ones. Had set out on the false principle that great sufferings prove great sins, and that temporal prosperity must always accompany true piety. Had therefore concluded that Job must be both a transgressor and a hypocrite. Had consequently employed arguments to bring him to humiliation, repentance, and prayer. Among other arguments, had held out to him the promise of deliverance from trouble and restoration to prosperity. Observe—

1. *Much wisdom required in ministering to a mind diseased.* Care to be taken to employ only solid considerations and sound arguments. Only truth will satisfy and heal a troubled spirit. Preachers to beware of "daubing with untempered mortar."

2. *Scripture truth, rightly applied, the only medicine for sin-sick souls.* Scripture written that through patience and comfort from it we might have hope (Rom. xv. 4). Paul's direction to Christian mourners: "Comfort one another with these words,"—the truths he had just stated (1 Thess. iv. 18).

3. *The honour and corresponding responsibility of being made a physician of souls.* Requires—(1) Study and knowledge of cases; (2) Knowledge of the requisite remedies; (3) Skill in applying them; (4) Sympathy with the sufferer. Christ the Great Physician of souls, and an example to all others. The best thing the preacher can do is to direct the Christian mourner and the sin-sick soul to Him (1 Cor. ii. 2).

VI. Keen remonstrance and reproof (verses 5—13).

1. *Begs his friends only to refrain from speaking altogether* (verse 5). "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom."—Verse 13. "Hold your peace, and let me alone." Application of the maxim in Prov. xvii. 28. Silence may not only give the appearance of wisdom, but is often wisdom itself. The part of a wise man either not to speak, or to speak to the purpose. Our speech to be "with grace seasoned with salt."

2. *Bespeaks their attention to his reasoning and reproof* (verse 6). "Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips." A duty owed to a brother both to prove and reprove—to *prove error* and *reprove sin* in him (Lev. xix. 17; Prov. ix. 8).

3. *Shews their sin in acting as they had done.* Their sin—(1) In *dissembling and*

using false arguments, while pretending to defend God and His procedure (verse 7). "Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him"—(speaking differently from what their consciences believed, in order to please God and uphold his cause). To make God appear just in afflicting Job, they, contrary to their convictions, wished to make him out a guilty transgressor. Observe—(i.) *God needs no false doctrine or unsound reasoning to defend Him or His doings.*—(ii.) *God's cause needs no sinful compromises or questionable measures to uphold it.* Neither the wrath nor the wrong-doing of man "worketh the righteousness of God."—(2) *In giving partial judgment for God, and presuming to make themselves His patrons, as if he needed either their favour or defence* (verse 8). "Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?" Good men to be God's witnesses, but not His patrons or advocates. A sin in His sight to judge, not according to the merits of the case, but the quality of the parties. Partiality in reference to *men* an injustice, in reference to *God* an insult. God's cause to be defended not with favour and partiality, but with truth and justice. Favour and acceptance of persons in judgment so obnoxious to God that He accounts it a sin, even when in reference to Himself. Only a blind, false, and superstitious regard to religion defends it with anything but truth and honesty.—(3.) In *condemning what they secretly believed to be right, or maintaining with their lips what they did not believe in their hearts* (verse 9). "Is it good (or will it be for your advantage) that he search you out (examine and expose your secret motives?) Or as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? He will surely reprove you, if you do secretly accept persons. Shall not His excellency make you afraid (of acting thus hypocritically), and His dread fall upon you?" (or, "is it not His majesty that makes you afraid [of speaking according to your convictions] and does not the dread of him overwhelm you?' [so as to act hypocritically in the matter]. Their condemnation of Job not from conviction of his guilt but from fear of God's displeasure, and the desire to appear on His side. Observe—(i.) *All dissimulation hateful to the God of truth.* Believers so to act as willing to bear the scrutiny of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. (ii.) *Fearful mockery of God to cloak our want of charity to man with a pretended zeal for God.* (iii.) *Necessary in maintaining the cause of religion, to examine our motives and the means we employ in doing so.* A good cause may be defended from evil motives, and a bad cause may be upheld under the appearance of piety. A sin to act from slavish fear of the Almighty, rather than from conviction and a regard to truth.

4. *Declares the worthlessness of his friends' authorities and maxims with reference to the case in hand* (verse 12). "Your remembrances are like ashes (or, 'your memorial sayings are proverbs of ashes,'—worthless, and easily scattered by the wind); your bodies to bodies of clay" (or, "your towers, or defences,"—*i.e.*, your arguments and maxims—are "towers of mud,"—as opposed to those of stone, without strength or solidity, and easily thrown down). Probably a proverbial phrase for weak and worthless arguments. The reference to the quotations from the ancients in his friends' speeches. These called "remembrances," or "memorial sayings," as intended to be carried in the memory, and so kept ready for use. Particularly numerous among the Arabs, and taking the place of laws. Abundant in the speeches of Job and his friends, especially of the latter. Great part of Oriental wisdom and learning consisted in the knowledge and ready recitation of these traditional maxims. Their value to be decided on their respective merits. Not to be regarded as in themselves inspired productions. Probably neither their authors nor reciters inspired men. As much wisdom required in the application as in the composition of them. "A parable in the mouth of fools" proverbially worthless and injurious (Prov. xxvi. 7, 9). In the case of Job's friends the fault chiefly in the application. The maxims themselves generally good, according to the views prevalent at the period. Care to be taken by preachers and others—(1) *That quotations, especially those from Scripture, are correctly applied;* (2) *That the arguments they employ are solid ones*—not "defences of mud."

V. His Resolution to plead his cause with God at whatever risk (verse 13).

"Let me alone, that I (or I myself) may speak (*viz.* to God), and let come on me what will." (Verse 14).—"Wherefore do I (or, 'come what may,'—repeated from previous verse,—'I will) take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand." A proverbial expression for "expose myself," *viz.*, to the threatened peril of suffering for presumption in pleading his cause with God. The attempt considered by his friends as most daring and perilous. *Faith and a good conscience are courageous, even in reference to God Himself* (1 John, iii. 21). The righteous are bold as a lion (Prov. xxviii. 1). "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful." Job's case with God that of Esther with the king: "I will go, and if I perish I perish" (Esth. iv. 16). Abraham's case in pleading for Sodom: "I have taken

upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes (Gen. xviii. 27. *Necessity and love make men courageous.* —Verse 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him (or, 'behold, he will slay me,' or 'let Him slay me, I will not expect' [anything else]—the Hebrew words for 'not' and 'in him,' the same in sound); but I will maintain (or, 'only I will prove and argue') my ways before Him." The antithesis between the third and the first and second clauses, rather than between the second and the first. Observe—

1. *The boldness of Job's faith and conscious integrity here rises to its highest pitch.* Though with only death before him as the result, he will still maintain his integrity, even at the tribunal of the Almighty. THE HEAT AND TURNING POINT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN IN THESE WORDS. Satan's charge,—Job will give up all, even his religion, to save his life. Thus it will be shown that God has not a sincere disinterested servant in the world; that all religion is mere selfishness and time-serving policy. God will thus be stripped of His honour in the universe. For Job to have given up his integrity and acknowledged he was not the man he had appeared, would have given the victory into Satan's hand. Job would have been condemned out of his own mouth. Fear would have made him a liar, and to save his life he would have thrown away his religion. This the aim of Satan, and the tendency of all the arguments of his friends, cunningly suggested by himself. JOB PREFERS TO DIE, and Satan is defeated. Glorious triumph of faith and a good conscience! *Many a believer, like Job, the battle-field between God and Satan.* As he maintains faith and a good conscience, God is honoured and Satan put to shame.

2. *Job persuaded that though his daring might end in death, it would ultimately prove his deliverance* (verse 16). "He also (or, 'even this') shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite [as Job's friends charged him with being] shall not come before him." The fact of his appealing to God in the face of such peril, a proof of his innocence. "The foolish shall not stand in His presence" (Ps. v. 5). The righteous Judge would acquit him of the charges of his friends, and of any sin as the cause of his suffering. Even should death ensue, a deliverance awaited him beyond death. His innocence would be vindicated, which with him was salvation. The day would come when this would be done before an assembled universe (ch. xix. 25). *The believer's case always safe in God's hands* (2 Tim. i 12.).

VI. Job requests his friends' attention to his pleading, and predicts his success (verse 17).

"Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration [in reference to my innocence] with your ears. Behold now, I have ordered my cause (—have already set in order my pleading as a general draws up his forces for battle); I know that I shall be justified" (—shall gain the cause and be pronounced righteous by my Judge). Job actually justified by God as he expected, though not till he had humbled himself and repented in dust and ashes (ch. xlii. 6). Observe—(1) *The boldness and assurance of a good conscience before a righteous tribunal.*—(2) Job's language *that of Christ himself, and of the believer trusting as a sinner in Christ's merits* (Is. l. 7—9; Rom. viii. 32—34). Job, in the circumstances, rightly trusted to his innocence and integrity as the ground of his justification by God. Men, as sinners, have not to plead their own righteousness as the ground of their acceptance, but that of the Surety provided for them by God Himself. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again." Christ's name and title, *The Lord our righteousness* (Jer. xxiii. 6). This also the righteousness of Job, viewed as in common with others a sinner before God (ch. xl. 4; xlii. 6). Job upright in his life as a true servant of God, and so justified by *his own* righteousness before *men;* Job a sinner in himself in the eye of the Divine law, and so justified by the righteousness of *his Surety* before *God.*

VII. Introduction to the pleading (verses 19—22).

1 *Challenges any opponent in the controversy* (verse 19). "Who is he that will plead with me?" Defies any to shew that he is guilty of any crime deserving such unusual treatment. Similar challenge by God's righteous Servant (Is. l. 8); and by the Apostle in reference to believers (Rom. viii. 34).

2 *Expresses his intense desire to plead his cause before God, whatever the result.* "For now if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost" (or, "for now [if he can make good his cause against me and prove me guilty] I will hold my tongue and die").

3 *Begs only to be freed from restraint in pleading* (verse 20). "Only do not two things unto me, then will I not hide myself from thee." These two things specified—(1) The removal or lightening of his present suffering: "Withdraw thine hand far from me" (verse 21). (2) The withholding the overwhelming terror of his majesty; "and let not thy dread make me

afraid." The result of this request being granted,—"Then call thou (as plaintiff in the case), and I will answer (as defendant); or let me speak (as plaintiff), and answer thou me [the complaints that I have to make]." His wish either that God would accuse and give him an opportunity of answering for himself; or allow him to present his complaint as suffering without any known cause. No small presumption in the eyes of the friends for Job to wish either of these. The language only to be excused in the peculiar circumstances of the case. No sinner's part either to *complain against God*, or to *answer His charges*. Ultimately Job is taught to give up the place both of plaintiff and defendant. Observe—

1. Job's difficulties in pleading his cause were—God's *hand upon him*, and God's *dread over him*. God's hand easily made too heavy for any creature to bear. If so heavy on a *saint*, what must it be on a *sinner?* "If these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If God's dread be overwhelming to a saint in a world of mercy, what will it be to the sinner in a world of doom? Good so to realise God's terror *now*, as to escape it *hereafter*.

2. The difficulties removed, Job would plead with God and not *hide himself from Him*. Natural for fallen men to seek to hide themselves from God. Adam's first act after the Fall was to sew fig-leaves together to *hide his own nakedness;* his second, to *hide himself* from God among the trees. Peter's language to Christ the natural expression of conscious guilt in presence of Divine majesty: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Christ the true hiding-place of a sinner provided by God himself. Hidden by faith in the clefts of that Rock, the sinner can behold the majesty of God without dread.

VIII. Job pleads with God (verses 23—28).

1. *Asks to be shewn his sins which are the cause of his suffering* (verse 23). "How many are mine iniquities and my sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin. Wherefore hidest thou thy face," &c. This not a confession of sin, but a desire to have it shown. Asked more in the spirit of self-justification than of humility. Job unconscious of such sin as to merit such suffering, yet willing to know it. First, as to the *number* of his sins, then any *particular transgression* that has entailed such chastisement. Three different kinds of offences indicated—(1) Iniquities, or perverse deviations from the Divine law; (2) Sins, or failures in duty; (3) Transgression, or the most heinous kind of sin, involving rebellion and wilful breach of the law of God. Though not the cause of his sufferings, yet Job's offences immensely more numerous than he was aware of. Like Paul, had lived in all good conscience; yet secret unknown sins might still exist. David's acknowledgement—"Innumerable evils have compassed me about—mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head" (Ps. xl. 12). God's testimony in regard to fallen man *before* the Flood, "Every imagination of the thought of his heart is only evil continually;" *after* the Flood, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). Man's natural heart a poisonous upas tree and a corrupt spring. The fruit necessarily partakes of the nature of the tree; the streams, of that of the spring. Sin, in consequence of its effects on the soul, usually not known. Like the fish that discolours the water by its own secretion, and so escapes its pursuer. Important prayer (Ps. xix. 12; xxvi. 2; cxxxix. 23). Job ultimately made to know his transgression and his sin (ch. xiii. 6). *The discovery of the Divine glory is at the same time a discovery of our own sin.* The result of Job's trouble, as of all sanctified affliction. Knowledge of sin necessary to the knowledge of salvation. "The whole have no need of the physician." Sense of sin needful to sense of the blood that was shed for its remission.

2. *Pleads his present condition.* (1) As *forsaken by* God. "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" (verse 24). This the most painful element in his sufferings. So with David (Ps. xiii. 1; xxii. 1), and with David's Lord (Matt. xxvii. 46). Implies previous enjoyment of His presence and favour (ch. xxix. 3—5). Only those who have known the sweetness of God's fellowship can realise the greatness of its loss. Intolerable to a child of God to be regarded and treated as an enemy. (2) As *feeble and afflicted.* "Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?" Touching images of frailty and prostration—a leaf driven to and fro by the wind, and dry stubble, worthless and ready to take fire. Seemed unbecoming the Divine majesty to pursue so feeble a creature with so much severity. Job's sufferings already of some continuance. Had consisted in successive blows, increasing in severity, without mitigation or suspension.—*To the eye of sense God's dealings often unnatural and unlike Himself.* Hereafter seen to be all holy, and wise, and good, infinitely becoming His Divine Majesty and character. Winter with its gloom, as necessary and as much a part of nature's economy, as summer with its glow. "God is His own interpreter," &c

Contrast with Job's pleading what the Saviour actually does (Ps. xlii. 3).

3. *Complains of the Divine treatment* (verses 26—29).—(1) *That God visited upon him the sins of his youth.* "Thou writest bitter things against me (—decreest bitter sufferings for me as the punishment of my offences), and makest me to possess (*Heb.* 'inherit') the iniquities of my youth (—to suffer the punishment of sins long passed, committed in the season of thoughtlessness, and then passed over)." Job entirely in the dark in regard to God's present dealings and the cause of his sufferings. *God's* part in them was to prove Job to be his faithful servant, in opposition to Satan's allegations. Believers unable to judge correctly of God's dealings from appearances. "Blind unbelief is sure to err," &c. Satan's object to get Job and every child of God to think as hardly of God as possible. God *might* visit the sins of youth on our riper years. Such sins deserving punishment, and requiring to be repented of in order to be forgiven. *David* remembered them, and besought *God* not to do so (Ps. xxv. 7). "Foolishness bound up in the heart of a child." The thoughts of man's heart evil from his youth. The natural effects of youthful sins sometimes experienced in maturer years. Job, conscious at least of youthful sins, supposes he must now be suffering the punishment of them. Yet Job's youth eminently virtuous and pious (ch. xxxi 1, 18). The sins of youth as well as of manhood atoned for by a Saviour's blood (Is. liii. 6). The bitterness of sin's punishment experienced by the Divine Surety on the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46).—(2) *That he was treated ignominiously as the vilest criminal* (ver. 27). "Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks." These a kind of clog, or fetter. Often a public, always a painful and ignominious punishment, and the severest restraint on personal liberty. Inflicted on Jeremiah in the gate, or most public place of the city (Jer. xx. 2); and on Paul and Silas in the dungeon at Philippi (Acts xvi. 24). Job's case appeared to him to resemble this. —"And lookest narrowly into all my paths" —either with the view of punishing, or of preventing escape. Job appeared to be watched as by a spy, or guarded as by a sentinel. Similar thought, ch. vii. 12, 20. His temptation common to believers "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense." God's true character and dealings described by the prophet (Mic. vii. 18, 19).—"Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet"—either—(*a*) as tracking his steps with a view to punishment; or (*b*) as marking him as a criminal or runaway slave with branded feet; or (*c*) as hemming in his path and forbidding escape. The flesh mistakes friends for foes. In the battle of Alma men fighting in the dark fired on their own countrymen. Satan's doings often mistaken for God's, and God mistaken for a foe.—(3) *That his lot was to pine away and perish* (verse 28). "And he as a rotten thing consumeth (or, 'and the same,' viz., the same unhappy culprit, meaning himself—a poetical and tragical change of the person, as better indicating his sense of his vile condition), as a garment that is moth-eaten." The humbling comparison of himself to worm-eaten wood, or to moth-eaten clothes, suggested by his bodily condition. The latter a common poetical figure for gradual but sure destruction. Applied to the body under disease (Ps. xxxix. 11); to men in general (Is. l. 9). The present verse closely connected with the following chapter, and forming a point of transition to it. Job's condition as frail and dying a plea with God for pity and forbearance. The plea remembered in regard to Israel (Ps. lxxviii. 39); in regard to men in general (Ps. ciii. 13, 14; Is. lvii. 16). God's mercy pities men's persons while his justice punishes their sins. Hence the gracious provision of a Substitute (Is. liii. 6).

CHAPTER XIV.

CONTINUATION OF JOB'S PLEADING WITH GOD.

I. Pleads the common infirmity of human nature (verse 1—4).

Man, from the very nature of his birth, frail and mortal, suffering and sinful. "Born of a woman." Allusion to the sentence pronounced on Eve after the fall (Gen. iii. 16), "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." Like parent, like child. Such a birth a plea with the Almighty for lenience and forbearance. Three evils resulting to humanity from that birth—

1. *Mortality.* "Of few days." Man ever since the fall has been short-lived. Jacob's testimony at the age of a hundred and thirty —"Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Gen. xlvii. 9). The longest life short.—(1) In comparison with eternity; (2) As compared with what it would have been but for our fall. Man's death the result

of sin. Probably the tree of life in the garden of Eden a symbol of man's immortality, and a means of effecting it. Death among the lower animals no argument against the doctrine that *man's* death is the wages of sin. As easy for God to make man's body immortal as to make it at all. If man reaching the age of Adam and Methuselah was short-lived, what is he now? Sad insanity, for the sake of this short span, to throw away a blissful eternity!

2. *Suffering.* "Full of trouble." Man's life on earth not merely sprinkled with with trouble, but *saturated* with it. The first scene disclosed by Scripture after the Fall is,—Adam and Eve weeping tears of anguish over a son slaughtered by the hand of his brother. A representative event. Man's history, even under an economy of mercy and the operation of grace, a record of blood and tears. "Few and evil," the description of most men's lives. The "trouble" both inward and outward. Disquietude and unrest the natural man's daily experience. No peace to the wicked. Man's soul a sea continually agitated by the winds of passion. The name of external troubles "Legion." Bodily diseases a part of that death which is the wages of sin. Death itself a prominent element in the troubles of life. Life clouded by the fear and apprehension of it, in respect either to ourselves or our friends. Deep trouble through its inroads into the domestic or social circle. Man's inhumanity, unkindness, and wrong to his fellow-man. Reverses of fortune, poverty, want. Not least, the trouble superinduced by our own conduct. Suffering produced by sin as heat by fire. Trouble as man's lot on earth a fact of universal experience. "The world is an abode which if it make thee smile to-day, will make thee weep to-morrow" [*Hariri, an Arabian poet*].

Man's frailty and mortality set forth under two impressive figures:—

1. A *flower* (verse 2). "He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down." Man compared to a flower—(1) From its origin, the earth; (2) Its beauty; (3) Its delicate texture and construction, contrasted with the fruit; (4) Its frailty; (5) Its end. If allowed to grow, soon fades and falls off, but liable also to many casualties,—from the hand of men, the tooth of animals, the nipping frost, the mower's scythe. Man the goodliest flower framed by his Maker's hand. "Godlike, erect, with native honour clad." His goodliness as the flower of the field. Like the blossom, which opens, expands, reaches its perfection, fades, and then falls to its native earth. More frequently is prematurely "cut down." His life exposed to a thousand casualties. The flower however falls off only to make way for the fruit. If prepared by grace, man dies only to ripen in a happier sphere.

2. A *shadow.* "He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." Time early measured by the shadow of a dial or a spear stuck in the ground. The shadow on the dial-plate never stands still. Glides on from hour to hour, from morning to noon, and from noon to night. The motion imperceptible, but constant and progressive. Neither stands still nor goes back. Only terminated by the setting of the sun or an unexpected cloud. So man's passage from the cradle to the grave. Hastens to the evening of death, which however often arrives unexpectedly before it is noon. The primæval sentence in continual execution,—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The shadow an appropriate emblem also of the pleasures and pursuits of time, as empty and unsubstantial.—Lessons:—(1) To form a true estimate of the enjoyments and interests of time and eternity. (2) To improve our fleeting stay in this world to the preparation for a better. (3) To make a diligent use of present moments which alone are ours. (4) To stand always prepared for life's unexpected termination.

Human frailty employed by Job as a plea for leniency and forbearance (verse 3). "And dost thou open thine eyes upon (—pay rigid attention to) such an one (—one so frail, miserable, and short-lived)? and bringest me (or him) into judgment with thee" (—accusing and contending with him for his faults against thee)? The plea acknowledged by God (Ps. lxxviii. 39; ciii. 14; Is. lvii. 16; Gen. vi. 3). God however has opened His eyes on frail and suffering man, but differently from what Job intended. Has opened them in love and pity, so as to provide deliverance from man's wretched condition. So in regard to typical Israel (Exod. iii. 7, 8). God's eyes opened graciously on every humble and contrite soul (Is. lxvi. 2). On his covenant people, to watch over, defend, and bless them (Zech. iv. 9.

3. *Depravity,*—the third evil resulting to man from his birth (verse 4). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." From sinful parents can come only a sinful offspring. The plant must be according to the seed—the fruit according to the tree. God created Adam in His own likeness; Adam, after the Fall, begat children, not in God's likeness, but his own (Gen. v. 3). Men now shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. li. 5). "In Adam all die,"—spiritually as well as physically and legally (1 Cor. xv. 22). The corruption of human nature in its root acknowledged by the heathen. "Nobody is born without vices,

—the saying of a heathen poet. Man found everywhere and in all circumstances, corrupt and depraved. Savage and civilized partake of the same general character. Only to be accounted for by a common depraved nature. Children exhibit the same depravity as their parents. Deceit, envy, coveting, and self-will, common in early childhood. No outward restraint or appliances able to remove or overcome this innate depravity. No clean or holy thing ever brought forth out of man's sinful nature. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Grapes not gathered from thorns. What is holy may proceed from a sinful *man*, but not from a sinful *nature*. God does not produce the fruits of the Spirit from man's old sinful nature, but from a new one imparted. Two distinct and opposite natures, the old man and the new, in a child of God, each producing its own proper fruits. The presence of the new makes the man a saint; that of the old a sinner. The believer is holy, and produces holy fruits in virtue of his new and holy nature; he is still sinful, and produces sinful fruits in virtue of his old and sinful one. Hence the Saviour's teaching: "Ye must be born again." The old nature crucified in a believer and destined to die; the new nature victorious even now, and ultimately alone in the field.

II. Pleads for removal or relaxation of his sufferings (verse 5—12).

His *prayer*, and the *grounds* of it.

1. *His prayer* (verse 6). "Turn from him" (or, "look away from him," *i.e.*, from Job himself), that he may rest (obtain relief from suffering, or rest in death), till he accomplish as an hireling his day" (or, 'that he may enjoy,' as far as a hireling may do so, 'his appointed period' of labour, viz. the present life, or find the rest of evening after his toil, viz., in death). Human life already spoken of as "the days of a hireling" (ch. vii. 1);—(1) As a certain definite period; (2) As a period of toil and endurance. Job's day now felt to be especially oppressive. The burden and heat of the day for day-labourers in the East, especially severe (Matt. xx. 12). The rest of evening greatly longed for (ch. vii. 2). Job fluctuates between desire for alleviation of the burden and for rest in the grave. So also in ch. vi. 8, 9; vii. 19; x. 20. *Times in a believer's experience when life seems especially burdensome.* The feeling of David (Ps. lv. 6); of Elijah (1 Kings, xix. 4); of Jonah (Jon. iv. 3, 8); of Jeremiah (Jer. ix. 2: xii. 5). Once the feeling of Jesus (Matt. xvii. 17). Christ at such times, as "a river of waters in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Believers not tempted above what they are enabled to bear. In the day of the rough wind, the east wind stayed. Strength made equal to our day. "My grace is sufficient for thee."

2. *Grounds of the prayer* (verse v. 7—12). (1) *The time of our stay on earth fixed by God himself* (verse 5). "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Job troubled with no doubts on the subject of

Predestination.

That God appointed the bounds of life as certain with Job as that He him at all. This belief held firmly by the Arabians to the present day. The doctrine of the Bible. Our time in God's hand. Man unable to add a cubit to his stature, an hour to his age. Consistent with the operation of second causes and natural laws Means appointed along with the end. "Man's life no more governed by the Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune" [*M. Henry*]. The fact pleaded by Job as a ground for the mitigation of his sufferings. The few short years allotted on earth may be graciously spared such excessive, accumulated, and continued affliction. It is still with God to say both how long and how severe our sufferings on earth shall be. Predestination perfectly consistent with

Prayer.

The Almighty not, like the God of the Stoics, bound by fate. May not change His *purpose*, but may alter His *procedure*. Changes in His outward procedure already in His secret purpose. The thread of man's life in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten it according to circumstances already foreseen. Hence full scope for the exercise of prayer. Prayer and its answers no interference with God's purposes. Not only *what* God does, but *how* He does it, already predetermined. *Believing prayer one of the means appointed with the end.* God builds up Zion at the "set time" to favour her, because He regards "the prayer of the destitute" (Ps. cii. 13—17). The duty and prevalence of prayer a fact as well of experience as of revelation. Prayer and its efficacy an instinct of human nature. One of the great moral laws under which God has placed His intelligent creatures. Man's inability to reconcile it with his philosophy no argument against it. *Man must pray;* and *God is the hearer of prayer.*

(2.) *Our departure from this world final and irrevocable.* Man's case at death is—(i.) *contrasted* with that of a *felled tree* (verse 7). "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut

down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch (or shoot) thereof will not cease; though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die (to all appearance) in the ground; yet through the scent of water (—its gentle contact, like an exhalation or an odour,) it will bud and bring forth boughs (*Heb.* 'a crop' of shoots) like a plant (or, 'as if it had been planted.') But man (even in his best estate—*Heb.* 'the strong man') dieth and wasteth away (or, 'is prostrated and gone'—loses all inward power of recovery or revival); yea, man (*Heb.*—man as sprung from the earth, '*Adam*') giveth up the ghost and where is he?" (*i.e.*, is no more to be seen—a Biblical and Arab phrase).—(ii.) *Compared to water disappearing* by evaporation, absorption, or otherwise (verse 11). "As the waters fail from the sea (or lake,—the term applied to any considerable collection of water, Jer. li. 36; Is. xix. 5); and the flood (or winter-torrent) decayeth and drieth up (in summer); so man lieth down (in the grave) and riseth not; till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Man at death disappears for ever as a resident of this present world. No return to a mortal life. "The bourne whence no traveller returns." *That needs to be well done that can be done only once.* (See also ch. vii. 9, 10).

The question asked (verse 14)—"If a man shall die, shall he live again?"—capable of a double answer. In regard to the present world, or the world in its present state, No; in regard to a future resurrection, Yes. The fact of such resurrection, however, probably not, at least distinctly, in Job's mind.

The doctrine of the

Resurrection

One of gradual development. Death viewed by most nations of antiquity as a "perpetual sleep." Revelation *assures* us of an awaking out of it (Dan. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 14—17). That awaking at the Lord's appearing, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise" (2 Pet. iii. 7, 10, 11). New heavens and a new earth the promised abode of resurrection saints (2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 1). Resurrection only to follow the sin-atoning and death-destroying death on the cross. Hence the slight knowledge of it by Old Testament saints. The knowledge of it to be only according to the knowledge of that which was the foundation of it. Life and immortality brought to light by Christ Himself (2 Tim. i. 10). As in Adam all die, so only in Christ shall all be made alive. Christ rose as the first-fruits of them that slept. Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming (1 Cor. xv. 20—23). Only faint and occasional glimpses of the resurrection obtained by Old Testament believers. David's hope expressed prophetically of the Messiah's resurrection, rather than personally of his own (Ps. xvi. 8—10; Acts ii. 25—31). The Lord's second appearing, and His people's resurrection as bound up with it, the blessed hope of New Testament believers. Vague and dim apprehension now exchanged for glorious certainty (2 Cor. v. 1; Phil. iii. 21).

State after death.

The question "Where is he? (verse 10), solemn and important in relation to the *man*, viewed as possessing an immortal spirit. Only two states after death. Lazarus is carried into Abraham's bosom. The rich man lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Where? Judas went to his own place. "The righteous hath hope in his death." The penitent thief was in Paradise, while his lifeless body was cast into a pit. Where was his companion who died in his sins? Psalm ix. 17 gives the solemn answer. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

III. Job desires a temporary concealment in the grave (verse 13).

"O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave until thy wrath be past (—the present affliction viewed as a token of that wrath); that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me." Has doubts as to the possibility of this wish being accomplished. "If a man die, shall he live again?" (verse 14).—Returns to his wish and states what would be the result of its being granted. "All the days of my appointed time (or warfare, as ch. vii. 1) will (or would) I wait till my change (dismission or renovation) come. Thou shalt (or shouldst) call and I will (or would) answer; thou wilt (or wouldst) have a desire to the work of thine hands." A confused wish of Job's troubled spirit. Apparently inconsistent with his previous statements about man's irrevocable departure out of this world. Prayer, especially in deep affliction, often without much reflection. Even believers sometimes know not what they ask. Yet a great truth in his words, though but dimly apprehended by himself. Truths often uttered through the presence of the Spirit, when but imperfectly understood by the speaker (1 Pet. i. 12).

"To the imagination may be given
The type and shadow of an awful truth."

Much more when the human spirit is in intimate communion with the divine. God's

saints actually hidden for a time in the grave and the spirit-world. The words of the prophet (Is. xxvi. 20), almost an echo of the patriarch's. A set time actually appointed to God's people for their recall from the grave. God remembers them there as he did Noah in the Ark (Gen. viii. 1). Their death precious in his sight. Their names engraven on the palms of his hands. Zion's wall's, though lying in ruins, continually before him (Is. xlix. 16). Living saints at the Lord's appearing not caught up till dead ones have been raised (1 Thess. iv. 15—17). The righteous, previous to the last and great tribulation, mostly taken away from the evil to come. Hidden in their chambers for a little moment till the indignation be overpast (Is. xxvi. 20). Observe—

1. Job's *faith and patience* (verse 14). "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. *Faith foresees* the change for the better, and *patience waits for it.* Three "*changes*" in a believer's experience—(1) When he is *born again*, and passes from spiritual death to life. (2) When he *falls asleep in Jesus* and enters the heavenly rest. (3) When he *rises from the grave* to be made in body and spirit entirely like Christ, and to be ever with the Lord. Probably the third of these vaguely and dimly indicated in Job's words. For this, as well as the change for the better at death, were his wish to be granted, he would patiently *wait.* Deliverance decreed for God's people from all trouble and from death itself. The *time* of that deliverance *in God's hands.* To be *patiently waited for.* Patient waiting the posture of believers in this world (Rom. viii. 23—25; 1 Thess. i. 10; Heb. x. 36). The vision is for an appointed time. The promise, Behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that waiteth. The change at a believer's death worth patient waiting for; much more the change at the Lord's appearing. At death we are *unclothed*, at the resurrection *clothed upon* (2 Cor. v. 2).

2. Job's *joyous anticipation*, should his wish be granted (verse 15). "Thou shalt *call.*" No awaking from the sleep of death but at the Divine *call.* "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust" (Is. xxvi. 19). For the call, see also John v. 28; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 14—17. The call of the Bridegroom (Cant. ii. 10—13).—A ready response given by believers to the call. "And I will *answer.*" The language of conscience innocence in the case of Job; of conscious acceptance "in the Beloved" in the case of every believer.—The *reason* of that Divine call—"Thou wilt have a desire to the *work of thine hands.*" Believers especially the work of God's hands—(1) In *creation.* Man's body a masterpiece of Divine skill directed by Divine benevolence.

"In their looks Divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone;
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure."

(2) In *regeneration and sanctification.* Believers God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 10). The expression frequent in Isaiah as applied to God's people (Is. xxix. 23; xlv. 11; lx. 21; lxi. 3). Believers a more costly work than all creation besides. Required the incarnation, suffering, and death of the Creator. The heavens the work of God's fingers, believers the work of God's hands (Ps. viii. 3). To this work of His hands God has a special *desire.* That desire one of—(1) Pity and benevolence; (2) Yearning affection; (3) Complacency and delight. The Father's desire is to them as His children; the Son's, as His Bride and the purchase of His blood; the Spirit's as His especial work. Faith unable, in the darkest time, to give up the idea of God's loving fatherhood. Looks through the gloomy passage of the grave, and sees more or less clearly a light shining at the farther end.

IV. Complains again of God's present severity (verse 16, 17).

"For (or, 'but') now thou numberest my steps (taking strict account of all my actions), dost thou not watch over my sin (in order to punish it)? My transgression is sealed up in a bag (as if so much treasure, that none may be lost or left unpunished, or as so much evidence preserved against me); and thou sewest up mine iniquity" (in order carefully to keep it for future punishment). A constant recurrence of God's present apparent severity. Remembered now, either as the reason for Job's wish for concealment in the grave (verse 13), or as the contrast of its fulfilment ('*but* now' &c.). *Hard to get over present grievances.* All Job's sufferings viewed as the result of God's resolution to punish his every failure. Observe—(1) "*Faith and unbelief view God's character and dealings in an opposite light*; (2) *A time of darkness and trouble unfavourable for a right judgment.* Job's present view of God's character and dealings entirely a mistaken one. His character is—"Slow to anger;" "Ready to forgive;" "Delighting in mercy." Sin, however, in order to its being forgiven, thus dealt with in the case of the Surety. The iniquities of all the redeemed laid upon Him. Strict account taken of sin by God in dealing with the Sin-bearer. No sin pardoned in the sinner without being punished in the Substitute. God just while justifying the ungodly. Job's view true in

a dispensation of simple *law*. *Not* true in a dispensation of mercy and under the covenant of grace. Sad to live under a dispensation of mercy and not to avail oneself of its benefits. The worst of all cases, to have the guilt of a rejected Saviour added to all other transgressions.

V. Again bewails man's mortality and wretchedness (verse 18—22).

First by comparison with the mutability everywhere visible in Nature. (1) The *mountain and the rock*, that seem the firmest of all earthly objects. These, or at least portions of them, torn away from the rest by earthquakes or other agencies, fall and then lie mouldering and crumbling on the ground (verse 18). "And surely (or 'but') the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed," &c. (2) *Stones*, the hardest of earthly materials, are worn away by the slow continual action of water (verse 19). "The waters wear the stones." (3) The very soil forming the loose surface of the earth, with the trees, grain, &c., that grow in it, is washed away by floods. "Thou washest away the things that grow out of the dust of the earth" (or, "the floods sweep away the dust," &c).

Man, a partaker of the general corruptibility and decay. "And (or, 'so') thou destroyest the hope of man" (—'wretched' man's hope and expectation of prolonging his life on the earth). Human mortality in keeping with the decay of all visible nature. Man ordinarily thinks of death as at a distance from him. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." The hope of evading the last enemy vain. The sentence has gone forth, Dust thou art, &c. (verse 20). "Thou prevailest for ever against him (—'always,' or, 'to complete victory'), and he passeth," (or, "he is gone,"—departs of this world). Man properly uses his endeavour to prolong his life. Battles against the sentence, "Unto dust shalt thou return." In vain. The victory always with God who executes his own sentence. Three stages in this victory—(1) *Disease*. "Thou changest his countenance." Sickness alters the state of our frame, and the aspect of our face. Instead of the glow and plumpness of health comes the paleness and emaciation of disease. Job himself at the time an example of his own words. (2) *Death*. "Thou sendest him away." Death is God's dismission. "Return ye children of men." The world "a stage where every man must play his part." The time for his exit in God's hand. (3) *The disembodied state* in the

World of Spirits.

Represented by Job—

1. As a *state of ignorance of what takes place on earth*, especially as regards *surviving relatives* (verse 21). "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." Parents naturally very deeply interested in the prosperity or adversity of their children. In the spirit-world, ignorant of and unaffected by either. Absolute separation from all the living and the creatures of the present world. This however not necessarily to be regarded as a divine declaration of the real state of the case. Rather the utterance—(*a*) Of Job's own melancholy spirit at the time; (*b*) Of the views generally entertained on the subject at that early period. The knowledge possessed by the departed in reference to survivors still a mystery. Among "the spirits of the just," probably more of such knowledge than we are aware of. Joy among the angels of God over one repenting sinner. Naturally also among departed saints. Hence, still more, over a repenting relative. Such knowledge an obvious increase to their joy and praise. Angels constant attendants on believers in life, and their escort to paradise at death. Departed saints therefore probably made acquainted by angels, if not more directly, with the circumstances of converted relatives on earth. The mere worldly prosperity or adversity of surviving relatives, however, even if known, probably, as such, a matter of the utmost insignificance to departed saints.

2. As a *state of suffering and grief* (verse 22). "But his flesh upon him shall have pain and his soul within him shall mourn" (or, "only his flesh shall have pain on account of himself, and his soul on account of himself shall mourn"). The dead man represented as occupied with his own concerns, not those of his surviving friends. His state not one of pleasure but of pain; his experience not one of joy but of grief. Spoken of man in general without reference to distinction of character. Also spoken according to the view then entertained of the state of departed spirits. That state one of anything but comfort or joy (see ch x. 21, 22). The "flesh" and "soul" here viewed as making up the man, who is regarded as still conscious in the spirit-world. That consciousness, however, one only of discomfort. Hence, the desire for life so prevalent in Old Testament times. Almost any kind of life regarded as preferable to an abode in the world of spirits. Such views natural, apart from revelation. Even still the views of many living under the Gospel but ignorant of its truths. The experience of the body transferred to the departed spirit, as if partaking of it. The thing dreaded in death—"To lie

in cold abstraction and to rot." Views of the spirit-world entirely changed since the Advent of Him who is both the Life and the Light. Life and immortality brought by Him to light through the Gospel. The kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. The spirit-world now their Father's house—the better country—Paradise—the rest from labour—the Mount Zion—the place of Divine worship and communion—the heavenly Jerusalem—the general assembly and church of the first-born—the innumerable company of angels—the presence of Jesus, the Elder Brother and Mediator of the New Covenant. The views of Job more correctly applicable in reference to the unsaved dead. The rich man in hell (or Hades) lifted up his eyes, being in torment. Compared with the condition of an unsaved soul in the world of spirits—

"The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That ache, age, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on Nature, is a paradise."

Lessons:—

1. The comparative insignificance of worldly prosperity or adversity in view of the eternal world.

2. The infinite importance of securing a place of happiness beyond the grave—(1) For ourselves; (2) For our children and friends.

3. The value of the Gospel, and the duty of making ourselves acquainted with its precious contents.

4. The paramount necessity of a personal interest in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

CHAPTER XV.

SECOND COURSE OF DIALOGUES.—SECOND SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ.

Eliphaz less gentle and courteous than in his former speech. Probably irritated at his little success with Job, who rejected his friend's counsel and still maintained his own uprightness. The hostility of the friends more pronounced as the dialogue proceeds.

1. Eliphaz sharply reproves Job's speeches (verses 2—13).

Censures—

1. Their *emptiness and vehemence* (verse 2). "Should a wise man (*Heb.*, 'the wise man') utter vain knowledge (*Heb.*, answer [with] knowledge of wind, or windy sentiments), and fill his belly (his mind or heart, John vii. 38) with the East wind,"—cherishing and uttering opinions which are not only empty as the wind, but injurious to himself and others; like the parching, vehement east wind, scorching and drying up all vegetation. Such language as Job had employed, unbecoming, in the opinion of Eliphaz, the wise man that he had passed for. Job celebrated in his own country for wisdom as well as piety (ch. xxix. 8, 9. 21—23). "Should the wise man," &c.,—probably a taunt. Men with a character for wisdom to be careful to speak and act consistently with it. A little folly in such men like the dead fly in the apothecary's perfume (Ecc. x. 1).

2. Their *verbiage and unprofitableness* (verse 3). "Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches," &c.,—as if Job's speeches were mere talk. A charge as ungenerous and unfeeling as it was untruthful and unjust. Job no mere talker, though his words not always wise. A Christian's speech to be with grace seasoned with salt, and good to the use of edifying. The abundant talk of the lips tendeth to penury. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. Unprofitable talk the mark of an unregenerate heart.

3. Their *impiety and hurtful influence* (verse 4) "Yea thou casteth off fear (or, makest void the fear [of God as of no value], and restrainest (—lessenest or discouragest) prayer before God [as of no use]". Job's language viewed either as indicating want of reverence and piety in himself, or rather as tending to discourage it in others. The danger implied in Asaph's hasty conclusion: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain" (Ps. lxxiii. 13); or, in the language of the fool's heart: "There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1). Observe—(1.) The *interests of religion greatly in the keeping of its professors*; (2.) A *believer in trouble to be careful so to speak as to bear a good testimony to religion before the world.*

4. Their *wickedness and deceit* (verse 5). "Thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity (or, 'thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,' viz. to utter such wickedness), and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty." Job's language viewed as the studied contrivance of a wicked heart. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As a man is, so is his speech. When the heart restrains prayer the mouth puts forth peevishness. What piety appeared in Job's speeches uncharitably viewed by Eliphaz as only employed with the intent to deceive. His tongue that of the crafty, who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. xvi. 18). No new thing

for an upright man to be charged with hypocrisy. God's testimony regarding Job the opposite to that of Eliphaz. Observe—(1.) *A small matter for men to speak ill if God speaks well of us*; (2.) Our speech and conversation to be with "*simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom, but *by the grace of God*" (2 Cor. i. 12).

The charge of Eliphaz untrue in both its senses. Job spoke rashly, but neither cast off the fear of God nor restrained prayer. His words not always wise, but neither tended to destroy religion nor discourage devotion. A godly man may sin *against* the commandments; it is the part of a wicked man to sin *away* the commandments themselves. The casting off of God's fear the cause of all evil. When the fear of God goes out, the practice of sin comes in. The fear of God the beginning of wisdom; the casting of it off, the abandonment to all wickedness. The fear of God the sum of all godliness; the casting of it off, the sum of all sinfulness. Sad not to possess the fear of God; still worse to cast it off. To be without it ourselves is bad; to destroy it in others still worse. The deepest brand of guilt on a man's brow is, not only to sin himself, but, like Jeroboam, to make others to sin also (1 Kings xiv. 16; xv. 30, 34; xvi. 2, 19, 26). Job's sin that he seemed more to complain against God than to pray to Him. Sad at any time to restrain prayer, still more in the time of affliction (Ps. l. 15; Is. xxvi. 16). Prayer a principal part of God's worship and of man's religion. A prayerless life the mark of a graceless heart. Prayer is restrained either—(1) From distaste for it; or (2) From disbelief in its efficacy; or (3) From disdain and self-sufficiency. To restrain prayer to God is to be a god to ourselves. Believing prayer opens the door of mercy and the windows of blessing; to restrain prayer is to shut both against us.

5. Job's speeches reproved also for their *arrogance* and *pride* (verse 7). "Art thou the first man that was born, or wast thou made before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret (or, 'hast thou been a listener in the privy council') of God, and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou that we know not? What understandest thou which is not in us. With us are both the greyheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father. Are the consolations of God small with thee (or, 'too small for thee,' or, 'of little account with thee')? Is there any secret thing with thee (or, 'and the word which dealeth gently with thee;' or, 'and our mild addresses to thee')?" Job's ridicule of his friends' monopoly of wisdom retorted by Eliphaz upon himself. Grievous words stir up anger. Job had ridiculed his friends as if they were the whole race; is now ridiculed himself as if he were the first man that had been born. Wisdom rightly supposed to have been much greater in Adam than in his children, as made after the image of God himself. Similar language to that addressed here in ridicule to Job divinely applied to Christ as the wisdom of God (Prov. viii. 22—26). Hills spoken of as the firmest, and therefore supposed to be the most ancient, of earthly things. Said to be everlasting (Gen. xlix. 26; Hab. iii. 6). Eliphaz views his own and his friends' discourses as "the consolations of God," and angrily asks Job if these were too small for him, or if he held them of small account. Their discourses and consolations, however, rather adapted for an impenitent sinner than a tried suffering saint. Hence Job's low esteem of them (ch. xiii. 4, 12). Preachers and others to take care that what they present to mourners are in reality

The Consolations of God.

God the God of all comfort. Comforteth those that are cast down (2 Cor. i. 3, vii. 6). Comforts tenderly as a mother, effectually as a Creator, (Is. lxvi. 13, lxv. 18). Able to make either anything or nothing a comfort to us. Can multiply comforts as fast as the world multiplies crosses. His consolations viewed either as *spoken to us* or *wrought in us*. Are either good things *done for us* or *promised to us*. God comforts—(1) By His spirit; (2) By His word; (3) By His providence. His consolations include—(1) His purposes in trouble; (2) His promises of support and deliverance; (3) The benefits resulting from it; (4) The example of the saints and especially of the Son of God; (5) The fellowship of believers, and especially of Christ (Dan. iii. 25); (6) God Himself as our shield here and our portion hereafter; (7) His love as the origin of our trouble; (8) The glories of eternity as infinitely compensating for the troubles of time. Trouble itself a consolation to a child of God as the testimony of his Father's love. God's rod, like Jonathan's, brings honey on its point. "Thy rod and thy staff comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 4). Observe—(1.) *The consolations of God are not small.* Are able to meet every case. Strong consolation (Heb. vi. 18). Exceeding great and precious promises (2 Pet. i. 4). The Scriptures written that through patience and comfort we might have hope. The plaster of God's Word able to cover the largest sore of a sin-stricken soul. God has great consolations for great sorrows. His consolations like Himself. Christ Himself the consolation of Israel. The Holy Ghost the com-

forter. The consolations of God are—(i.) True and solid; (ii.) Holy and satisfying; (iii.) Adequate and suitable; (iv.) Lasting and durable. (2) *The consolations of God are not to be accounted small.* No small sin to slight God's consolations, as either insufficient or unsuitable to our case. These, on the contrary, to be highly valued—(i.) On account of their origin—the love of God; (ii.) Their costliness—the purchase of a Saviour's blood; (iii.) Their efficacy—as able to meet our case; (iv.) Their freeness on God's part and their undeservedness on ours.

6. Job's speeches reproved also for their *passion and rebelliousness* (verse 12). "Why doth thine heart carry thee away, and what do thine eyes wink at (as indicating passion, pride, and evil purpose)? That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth." Unfeeling and exaggerated questions. Neither Job's spirit nor his words to be always vindicated, but undeserving of such severe reproof. Reproof, when unjust and excessive, becomes cruelty instead of kindness. Tenderness a duty in dealing with a sinner, still more with a saint, and most of all with a sufferer. The language, and perhaps the looks of Job, at times indicative of unholy passion. The flesh even in a believer weak. The heat of the temper apt to carry away into hastiness of the tongue. Job at times too bold with God; yet his boldness that of a child, not that of an enemy. The spirit of an impenitent sinner is turned *against* God in trouble, that of a believer is turned *towards* Him. The latter the attitude of Job's spirit in his affliction (ch. xvi. 20).

II. Eliphaz insists on man's depravity (verse 14).

"What is man (wretched fallen man, *Heb.*, '*Enosh*'), that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints (or angels,—*Heb.* 'holy ones'); yea, the heavens (literally, or their inhabitants) are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man (or, 'how much less [shall] abominable and filthy man [be clean in his sight]') which drinketh iniquity like water?" A clear and strong declaration of man's deep and universal depravity. The object to prove Job a sinner, and convict him of arrogance in maintaining his uprightness. The argument is—(1) *Unsound.* The premises true but the conclusion false. Man universally depraved, but Job not therefore a bad man or a hypocrite; otherwise Satan's allegation just,—no such thing as genuine religion in the world. Grace and holiness in the individual consistent with depravity in the race. The object of redemption to renew fallen man to purity. Comparatively blameless morals and upright principles found even among the heathen. Examples; Socrates, Aristides the Just, Cyrus the Great. (2) *Useless.* Man's depravity admitted and maintained by Job as well as Eliphaz (ch. xiv. 4). Not absolute but relative purity claimed by Job. All but useless for a preacher to labour to prove what all his hearers fully admit. The passage valuable as a testimony to

The Depravity of Human Nature.

1. Declared in the *name* given to man here and elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, "*Enosh*," — miserable and desperately diseased. Man's very nature morally diseased. Inward renovation necessary in order to purity and holiness. To cleanse and renew man's corrupt nature, the work of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of Gospel truth. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you." The promise in the New Covenant: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean" (Ez. xxxvi. 25). David's prayer: "Create in me a clean heart." The object of Christ's death, to sanctify and cleanse the Church as with the washing of water by the word (Eph. v. 26). His prayer to the Father: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17). The believer in one sense "clean every whit" (John xiii. 10). Apart from grace none clean in God's sight. Sin stains man's best performances. His righteousnesses filthy rags (Is. lxiv. 6). Man only clean and holy as a member of Christ the Holy One, and in virtue of a new nature implanted in him by the Holy Ghost. At death, the last remains of the believer's sinful nature for ever gone. The leprous house taken down and rebuilt entirely free from the vile infection.

2. Man's depravity the result of his *birth.* Born naturally of a fallen woman, man's nature necessarily depraved. A clean thing not to be produced in the mere course of nature from an unclean (ch. xiv. 4). Man now shapen in iniquity in the womb, and conceived by his mother in sin (Ps. li. 5). Like mother, like child. One glorious and necessary exception. Christ "born of a woman," yet righteous and clean from His birth. The reason: "His conception by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost (Luke i. 35). Man's Saviour must be Himself a man, yet absolutely clean from his birth. To be a man he must be "born of a woman;" to be clean his conception must be the immediate production of Divine power. No necessity for the figment of the immaculate

conception of the Saviour's mother. Mary a holy woman, not by nature but by grace. Her song that of a saved sinner (Luke i. 47).

3. Man's character given in three particulars —(1) *Abominable.* Something to be loathed. Sin the abominable thing that God hates. Makes every creature abominable in whom it prevails. Man, as depraved, cast out like Israel at his very birth, to the loathing of his person (Ezek. xvi, 5). No education, refinement, or accomplishment able to make an unrenewed man anything less than abominable in the sight of God. (2) *Filthy,*—the filthiness rather to the smell than the taste. The noisomeness of a corpse or of a sewer. The sourness of a fermenting mass. Sin is death and moral putrefaction. Makes a man in whom it reigns a living corpse. Not all the perfumes of Arabia able to sweeten an unrenewed soul. (3) *Drinking iniquity like water.* (i.) Man loves and delights in sin. (ii.) Thirsts for it and pursues it eagerly. (iii.) Expects and endeavours to satisfy himself by its commission. (iv.) Commits it as a thing necessary to his existence; can no more live without it than an ox can live without drinking water. (v.) Practises it habitually, as a horse must daily drink water. (vi.) Finds pleasure in its commission, but nothing that permanently satisfies him; thirsts again. (vii.) Commits it abundantly, not sipping but drinking it. (viii.) Goes to it naturally, as an animal goes naturally to drink water; sin natural to a depraved heart. (ix.) Commits it easily and without effort; sins on easy terms and small consideration; water a common drink. Observe, however, a *contrast* as well as a *resemblance* in the case:—(i.) Water a creature of God; sin a thing of the devil. (ii.) Water designed by God for the use of man and beast; sin strictly forbidden by Him. (iii.) Water necessary for man's existence; sin not only not necessary, but ruinous. (iv.) Water beneficial to the drinker of it; sin only hurtful and destructive.

III. Eliphaz proposes to convict Job from the Fathers (verse 17) &c.

"I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen (—personally observed as well as heard from others) I will declare; which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it. Unto whom alone the earth (or land) was given (for their residence and government,—in opposition to Job's statement in ch. ix, 24,) and no stranger passed among them" (or, "came among them," as a resident or invader). Traditional maxims of the ancients avowedly introduced by Eliphaz as had already been done by Job and the other speakers. These ancients the fathers of "wise men," who had handed down their moral sayings to their posterity. To this posterity belonged Eliphaz himself. Like Job, a contemporary of Serug and Reu, the son and grandson of Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided after the dispersion (Gen. x. 25). The ancients or fathers, therefore, probably Noah and his son Shem, or Noah's ancestors back to Adam. The "wise men," those to whom the land of Arabia was given as their residence, viz., the sons of Joktan, the younger son of Eber (Shem's grandson), and Peleg's brother, by whom Arabia was first populated (Gen. x. 25—30). One of these sons of Joktan named Jobab, supposed by some to be the same with Job. The boast of Eliphaz that among these "wise men" or sons of Joktan, "no stranger" or foreigner had ever been allowed to corrupt their religion and morals. The glory of the Arabs is their language, their sword, and their pure blood. The true religion often corrupted by the mixture of foreign nations. Israel forbidden to make alliances with the nations around them lest they should "learn their ways." The saying of a heathen poet endorsed by Revelation, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Arabia famed for its wise men. These handed down to posterity the moral and religious truth received in like manner from their fathers.—The true religion propagated by parents and others carefully instructing the rising generation in its truths. The obvious and sacred duty of all who possess it (Ps. xlviii. 13; lxxviii. 3, 4).

IV. Quotation from the Fathers in reference to the experience of the ungodly (verses 20—35).

Noble specimen of Oriental poetry. Sublime and tragical, and among the most ancient in the world. A description of unprincipled men whose only aim is the acquisition of wealth and power, stopping at no means to obtain it, and then abusing it to the oppression of their fellow-men. Applicable in every period of the world, but more particularly in its earlier ages, when, as before the flood, "the earth was filled with violence." The characters especially such as the "mighty men which were of old, men of renown" (Gen. vi. 4, 11—13). Men of the class of Cain, Nimrod and Pharaoh—impious and daring towards God, cruel and unjust towards their fellow-men. The application wrongfully intended for Job, in order to bring him to conviction and repentance. The only ground for the application in his circumstances, none whatever in his character and conduct. Job, once rich and prosperous, was now in great misery through successive

blows of Divine providence. This sufficient ground with Eliphaz for its application. The doctrine intended by Eliphaz to be conveyed by it, as to the constant and exclusive attendance of misery upon wickedness in this world, repeatedly denied by Job (ch. xii. 6; xxi. 7), &c.

The description contains:—

1. The *character* of the persons intended. All sin deserving of punishment, but some sins more heinous in God's sight than others. The persons intended are described as—(1.) *Wicked* (verse 20). Men lawless and unprincipled, of wicked hearts and wicked lives. All men sinners, but by God's Providence and His renewing or restraining grace, all not *wicked* sinners.—(2.) *Violent oppressors* (verse 20). The distinctive character of these wicked men. Their wickedness manifested in their violent conduct and oppression of their fellow-men. Their object, power and wealth; their means of obtaining them, violence and wrong. Great warriors and conquerors. Ambitious chiefs and tyrants. Robbers on a large as well as a small scale. Particularly described by Zophar (ch. xx. 19). The character which Eliphaz afterwards directly ascribes to Job (ch. xxii. 6, 7, 9). A common character in those early ages, and in the barbarous and uncivilised state of a community.—(3.) *Daring and impious* (verse 25). "For he stretcheth out his hand against God and strengtheneth himself (or, 'plays the hero') against the Almighty; he runneth upon him (*viz.*, upon God,—rushes on Him with swiftness and fury, as Dan. viii. 6), even on his neck (like a fierce combatant, eager to grapple with his antagonist in close quarters; or, 'with his neck,' like a furious bull whose strength is in his neck and shoulders), upon (or with) the thick bosses of his bucklers" (like a band attacking with joined shields). The language of Pharaoh (Ex. v. 2); of Sennacherib (Is. xxxvi. 20); of the crucifiers of Christ (Acts iv. 25—27; Ps. ii. 1). Similar defiance of the Almighty exhibited by the Dragon and his angels (Rev. xii. 7). The character of obstinate and impenitent transgressors in general. Men "fight against God" while—(i.) Persevering in a course of sin; (ii.) Opposing God's cause or Gospel, His Church, or any of His people (Acts v. 39); (iii.) Contending for an object in opposition to His will, and by means which He forbids. Fearful stage in sin when men act as champions of hell against the God of heaven.—(4.) *Profligate and profane* (verse 34). "Hypocrites," or rather, profane and profligate men. Men who neither "fear God nor regard men." No reference intended by the term in the Old Testament to religious profession.—(5.) *Covetous and unjust* (verse 34). Men given to "bribery." As rulers and judges, accepting gifts as the bribe for a favourable though unjust sentence. Men who wronged others by perverting justice in order to enrich themselves. Accepted gifts for the perpetration of wicked deeds.—(6.) *Plotters of mischief* (verse 35). "They conceive mischief and bring forth vanity" (*Margin*, "iniquity"). The same character described, Ps. xxxvi. 4; Prov. iv. 16. Sins against our neighbour chiefly intended. Those who do not fear God readily plot against men.—(7.) *Cunning and deceitful* (verse 35). "Their belly (mind or heart, but with reference to conception) prepareth (contrives or matures) deceit" (for *others* in order to their own gain, for *themselves* in their disappointment of it). Evil ends often attainable only by deceit. So Satan and our first parents; Haman and the Jews; Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard.

2. The *temporary prosperity* of the persons intended (verse 27). "Because he covereth (or, 'though he have covered') his face with fatness (see Ps. lxxiii. 7), and maketh collops of fat on his flanks" (or, "hath made fat on his loins"). Good living his object. His god his belly (Luke xvi. 19).—"And he inhabiteth desolate cities (or, 'and though he inhabited cities destroyed by him' and taken into his own possession,—conduct ascribed to Crassus the Roman general), and in houses which no man inhabiteth (—emptied of their proper inhabitants), which are ready to become heaps" (or, "are doomed to ruins")—reminding Job of his own calamity in the case of his children (ch. i. 19). Temporary success in sin to be followed by ultimate ruin. The wicked raised for a deeper fall. Iniquity often like a tree full of blossom, to be blighted by the frost or blasted by the lightning. Prosperous villainy one of the mysteries of Divine providence.

3. Their *subsequent misery*. Suffering corresponding with sin. This objected to by Job as to its universal occurrence in this life. The passage describes—(1.) The *inward experience* of the wicked in this life (verse 20, &c.). "The wicked man travaileth with pain (or, 'is inwardly tormented') all his days (lives a life of anxiety and fear); and the number of years hidden to the oppressor" (or, "and the number of years," or "the few years [which] are laid up for" him). The whole life of the oppressor comes to be full of anxiety and alarm under the goad of an evil conscience. Sin, like a corpse or a putrid ulcer, breeds worms.—"A dreadful sound (*Heb.* 'a voice of alarms,'—not one terror but many) is in his ears; in prosperity, the destroyer (God's avenging justice, or some hand of violence as the executioner of it) shall come upon him" (what actually takes

place, or what the voice of conscience inwardly threatens him with). The Avenging Furies of the heathen expressive of facts in the experience of the daring transgressor. The suddenness of the destruction intended, or the presence of these voices of terror in the midst of outward quiet and prosperity. The unexpectedness of calamity a serious aggravation of it. "When they shall say, Peace and safety," &c. (Verse 22).—"He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness (that he shall ever escape out of the misery that threatens or has already overtaken him,—the language sadly suggestive of Job's own case); and he is waited for of the sword" (actually or in his own apprehension). Besides present evils he anticipates future ones. The sword of Damocles hangs over his head at his most sumptuous feasts. His terrified imagination sees a dagger wherever he turns. Only a violent and bloody death is before his eyes. "Every one that findeth me shall slay me." Despair of good the greatest evil. A wicked man has neither ground nor heart to believe [*Caryl*]. Faith a shield against the fiery darts of the devil; unbelief a shield against the tender mercies of God. Faith makes evil good; unbelief makes good evil.—(Verse 23). "He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it?" He becomes like Cain, "a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth." Job's fall from affluence to poverty might seem to afford an example. The bread he has taken from others now fails himself. The wicked wander for bread when they are rich as well as when they are poor. The godly are content in every condition.—"He knoweth that the day of darkness is near at hand,"—has the inward conviction that a time of poverty and calamity will soon overtake him. Terrible certainty of a guilty conscience. The Furies brandish in his face their threatening whip. Conscience holds up the sentence of condemnation before his eyes. The experience which impelled Judas to the fatal tree. The certain apprehension of future and speedy perdition one principal cause of suicide. Such terrors aided, if not generated, by the Tempter, who now becomes the Tormentor. The Gospel of the grace of God, free and immediate forgiveness through the blood of the cross to the chief of sinners, the blessed and only remedy in such a case. The oil of pardoning mercy alone able to smooth that surging sea. Jesus the only Physician that can minister to that mind diseased. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," has already in multitudes "cleansed the bosom of that perilous grief which weighs upon the heart," and changed black despair into bright and joyous hope. "Fear not, only believe." (Verse 24).—"Trouble and anguish (—multiplied and intensified distress, or, outward trouble and inward anguish) shall make him afraid." Again too much resemblance to Job's case (ch. vi. 4). Worse to fear evil than to feel it.—"They shall prevail against him" (or "hem him in"). Shall break his spirit or end his life. Shall scare him not only out of his comfort but out of his senses [*Caryl*].—"As a king (or general) ready to the battle." Trouble and anguish personified as a general in the midst of his troops, surrounding the enemy, rushing on to the attack and overpowering him. The evil-doer powerless to resist this attack of outward trouble and inward anguish. Troubles too great to bear, too thick to escape from. "My punishment is greater than I can bear." "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Such an experience often the result of long-rejected calls to repentance and offers of mercy (Prov. i. 24—30).

(2) The *outward visitation* of the wicked. (Verse 29). "He shall not be rich (or continue so,—shall not enjoy his ill-gotten wealth, which shall 'flow away on the day of wrath'), neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof (or 'extend his possessions, flocks, &c.') upon the earth" (or in the land). Apparently another side-glance at Job's losses. Ill-gotten goods never lasting. Sinners earn wages to put them into a bag with holes. Earthly joys, like children's toys, easily broken and soon forgotten.—(Verse 30). "He shall not depart out of darkness"—shall not escape out of the trouble and misery that shall overtake him. Endless misery the just wages of unceasing sin. —"The flame (—lightning or the hot wind of the desert, emblems of the wrath of God) shall dry up his branches (—his prosperity, more especially his children; another sad cut for Job, ch. i. 16, 19); and by the breath of his mouth (—the anger of God, compared to a scorching or a scattering wind) shall he go away" (retreat as a worsted combatant, or be whirled away as chaff or stubble, Ps. i. 4). God's mere breath able to sweep away the sinner. Indicates also the suddenness of the destruction.—(Verse 32). "It (*viz.* his death) shall be accomplished (or, 'the recompense shall be fully paid'; or, 'he shall be cut off') before his time, and his branch shall not be green" (—his children shall not survive or prosper, or his prosperity shall not continue). The prosperous wicked compared, as in verse 30, to a flourishing tree. So ch. viii. 16, 17; Ps. xxxvii. 35.—(Verse 33). "He (the sinner under the figure of a tree, or God in his mysterious judgments) shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast

off his flower as the olive" (when smitten by the frost or a pestilential wind). His prosperity brought to a sudden and premature end. —(Verse 34). "For the congregation of hypocrites (—the wicked themselves and their families along with them) shall be desolate." Neither numbers nor combinations able to secure the ungodly against God's judgments. "Though hand join in hand &c." Wealth gathered by man's unrighteousness often scattered by God's wrath.—"And fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery" (—the dwellings of corrupt and covetous judges). Divine judgments shall overthrow their families, if not their very dwellings, as in the mind of Eliphaz they had done in the case of Job's children (ch. i. 19). A literal exemplification in the case of the Cities of the Plain. Job cruelly made to see, as in a mirror, his own calamities, and, to intensify their bitterness, to see them as a judgment of God.

An apparent *warning* parenthetically introduced in the description by way of personal application (verse 31). "Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity (—in his riches, or in the iniquity which has procured them; or, let not him [any man] trust in the vanity by which he has been deceived): for vanity (probably used in another sense) shall be his recompense." A caution of general use, but especially intended for poor Job. The warning suggests the following lessons: —(1) All earthly possessions vanity, as unable to satisfy the soul, and sure to disappoint those who trust in them for happiness. The creature is vanity, both in its possession and its promises. Promises—(i.) Satisfaction; (ii.) Protection; (iii.) Continuance. Most vain to those who trust in it.—(2) Those possessions especially vain which have been dishonestly or violently obtained. "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (Prov. xxi. 6).—(3) The character of the ungodly to trust in vanity, in earthly possessions and pleasures which cannot satisfy, and in sinful courses which only end in misery and ruin (Is. lii. 2.) Men must trust in something, either God or vanity.—(4) The property of sin to deceive (Rom. vii. 11). The deceitfulness of sin (Heb. iii. 13). Deceivableness of unrighteousness (2 Th. ii. 10). Sin deceives as it promises—(i) Pleasure; (ii.) Profit; (iii.) Impunity. Sin promises all pleasure, and in the end robs of all peace.—(5) Men apt still to trust in that by which they have been already deceived (Prov. xxiii. 35).—(6) All unrenewed men deceived (Tit. iii. 3). He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside (Is. xliv 20). Satan the deceiver of the nations Rev. xx. 8). Men by nature, since the admission of Satan's first great deception, call evil good, and good evil; put darkness for light, and light for darkness; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Is. v. 20).—(7) The recompense of trusting in vanity is vanity—emptiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment. In indulging in sin and sinful pleasures men embrace a cloud. Like the apples of Sodom, dust in the hand that grasps them instead of fruit. Beautiful soap-bubbles. Vanity pursued ends in vanity experienced.—(8) Sin in itself the recompense of sin. Vanity another name for sin. No greater punishment than to be given up to one's own lusts and passions (Rom. i. 26, 28). The commission of one sin often punished by being left to the commission of another. Great part of the misery of the lost the abandonment to the power of sinful lusts, without any means for their gratification. Their fire of sinful passions unquenchable, with no object any longer to act upon. To sow to the flesh is to reap corruption. He that is filthy shall, after death, be filthy still. Sowing the wind, men reap the wirlwind; wind, but more boisterous and destructive. Sin a serpent, which, sleeping for a time, awakes only to sting and torment the soul that harboured it.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

I. Complains of the want of sympathy on the part of his friends (verses 2—5).

1. *They gave him only verses from the ancients about the punishment of the wicked and the prosperity of the righteous, such as he was already familiar with.* (Verse 2). —"I have heard many such things." In this, and the manner in which they did it, they showed themselves "miserable" (*margin*, "troublesome") comforters; (*Heb.* "comforters of trouble or mischief"). Professing to come as comforters, they had turned out tormentors. Professed comfort may be only an exasperation of sorrow. No small sin to "talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded." In speaking to tried ones, we need a tender heart and a gentle tongue. Easy to irritate the wound instead of healing it. Words may either—

> "Scorch like drops of burning gall,
> Or soothe like honey-dew."

Deep distress and despondency not to be cured by moral and religious aphorisms. "To preach of patience is often the very means of stirring up all impatience" [*Maurice*]. The tongue of the wise nowhere more needed than in the house of sorrow. The two requisites for a "comforter" found in Solomon's virtuous woman: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Prov. xxxi 26).

Men are "miserable comforters"—(1) When they comfort others with error and falsehood – as with erroneous views of God, of His dealings, or of themselves; "daubing with untempered mortar;" healing the hurt of the mourner "slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace;" (2) When they direct to improper means for relief—as drowning the remembrance of the trouble in the pleasures and pursuits of the world; (3) When they seek merely to divert the mourner's mind from the trouble, or persuade him to put away and forget his sorrow; (4) When they fail to point him to the true source of comfort—Christ as a Saviour and sympathizing Friend—the truths of the Gospel and of the Word of God. "The waters of Lethe will not change the nature of sorrow, but the blood of Christ will."

To be a true "comforter" we require—(1) To be able to sympathize with the troubled; (2) To understand, generally, the meaning and use of trouble. Trouble a part of our education for heaven, as well as for the right performance of our duties on earth,—to be accepted as a message from above—an angel of mercy sent by the God who is love; (3) To be acquainted ourselves with the truth with which we are to comfort others, and to have experienced in some degree the power of it on our own hearts; (4) To possess the spirit and imitate the conduct of Him whose mission on earth was to "comfort them that mourn;" (5) To speak truthfully and suitably to the case, while we present such views of God and His dealings as are fitted to impart light and comfort to the sad and sorrowing.

2. *Job's friends spoke as not realising his sorrow.* They treated him either with unfeeling reproofs, or sometimes with fine speeches (verse 3). "Shall vain words (*Heb.* 'words of wind,'—*airy*, empty speeches) have an end?" The friends had all followed in the same unprofitable strain. Job returns the reproach of Eliphaz (ch. xv. 2). Too much of the spirit of angry retort in these discussions. The time and country of the speakers, however, to be remembered. The Gospel of Jesus teaches us to give the "soft answer that turneth away wrath."—"Or what emboldeneth (or exciteth) thee that thou answerest?" No ground or need for continuing such speeches. Eliphaz had spoken as a man under excitement. The style and spirit of his second speech considerably different from that of his first. *Especially important for a comforter and instructor of others to exercise patience, and not to lose his temper.* No small part of wisdom to know how we "ought to answer every man." "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer" (Prov. xxiv. 26). Job's friends found it easy to repeat commonplaces, and shake their head.—(Verse 4). "I also could speak as you do: if (or 'would that') your soul were in my soul's stead. I could heap up words (—string sentences and verses together) against you, and shake mine head at you" (—either in condolence or solemn admonition). Easy for the whole to advise the sick. The great want in Job's friends a genuine sympathy. After the first oriental outburst of grief at their friend's calamity, all was cold, heartless, and even cruel. Selfishness the common sin of our fallen nature—

"The proud, the cold, untroubled heart of stone,
That never mused on sorrow but its own."

In Job's friends this coldness aggravated, if not generated, by false religious views and misinterpretations of Divine Providence. True religion softens the heart, and inclines it to kindness and compassion. A false religion generally the parent of cruelty.

Job expresses what his own conduct would be were they in his situation (verse 5). "I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving (or condolence) of my lips should assuage your grief" (—or perhaps, ironically, 'I could strengthen you with my *mouth*,' and give you lip-consolation as you give me, instead of the "hearty counsel" of a friend, Prov. xxvii. 9). Job's actual practice described. Acknowledged by Eliphaz himself to have been a comforter of many (ch. iv. 3, 4). His own testimony as to his manner of life in the time of his prosperity (ch. xxix. 25; xxxi. 18). His friends had dealt in words which had no weight or force (ch. vi. 25), and which only tended to exasperate his sorrow. *His* words, had their places been changed, would have strengthened and relieved them. Three objects to be aimed at in comforting those in trouble—(1) To strengthen them to bear their trouble; (2) To lighten their grief; (3) To lead them to the right improvement of their trial. The last, the object more especially aimed at by Elihu (ch. xxxiii. 15—30).

II. Renews his sorrowful complaint regarding his condition (verse 6—16).

His sorrow neither mitigated by speech

nor silence (verse 6). "Though I speak my grief is not assuaged; and though I forbear, what am I eased?" Natural for grief to find relief in words. The troubled spirit also often calmed by silent meditation. Job experienced neither. No relief found in the assertion of his innocence or utterance of his sorrow. He had spoken to God, to his friends, to himself, yet his grief remained. Had sat at first in silence many days, and had spent many silent hours since then. Still no ease to his trouble. A bad case that yields to no kind of treatment.

He ascribes his troubles to God (verse 7). "But now he hath made me weary" (—quite exhausted me, or laden me with trouble). Job's troubles accumulated and now of some continuance, with as yet no relief. The visit of his friends, instead of a balm, had proved a bitterness. All ascribed by Job to God. Good to eye God's hand in our troubles, whoever and whatever may be the instrument of it. No trial but of His sending. When Satan was labouring to "destroy" Job, it was only by God's permission and authority (ch. ii. 3). The part of a sanctified nature, to see God in every event of our lot, whether prosperous or adverse. So David—"Thou didst it" (Ps. xxxix. 9). "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him" (2 Sam. xvi. 11).

He turns from man and addresses his complaint to God Himself. "Thou hast." One word spoken to God in our trouble better than a hundred to man. The invitation (Ps. l. 15). The resolution (Ps. xlii. 8, 9). Tragic and touching description of Job's sorrows. Embraces—

1. *The loss of his family and alienation of his friends* (verse 7). "Thou hast made desolate all my company" (—overwhelmed in calamity all my family, and struck with astonishment all my friends). Difficult to forbear recurring to grievous visitations and present troubles. All Job's children removed by one fell swoop. His property gone. Himself a mass of loathsome ulcers. His wife and friends paralysed and alienated by his calamities. His very servants standing aloof from him (ch. xix. 13—19). A grievous aggravation of affliction when friends are alienated and stand a distance from us (Ps. xxxi. 11; xxxviii. 1; lxxxviii. 18). The experience of the Man of Sorrows foreshadowed in Job's (Matt. xxvi. 31, 34, 56).

2. *His wasted appearance construed by his friends into a token of guilt* (verse 8). "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles (or 'laid fast hold of me,' as a person arrested by the hand of justice), which [in the opinion of my friends] is a witness against me [that I am a guilty man]; and my leanness (—or 'liars,' or, 'my lie') rising up in me beareth witness to my face." A marred and meagre visage may testify to our grief, but not to our guilt. Christ's visage marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men (Is. lii. 14). *Our* guilt, not His own, and *our* sorrows carried by Him as our Surety, marred His visage and robbed His form of comeliness and beauty (Is. liii. 2, 4).

3. *The apprehension of Divine anger in His troubles* (verse 20). "He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me (*Heb.*, 'his wrath hath torn and violently opposed me'); he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me" (or, 'as my enemy he glares upon me with his eyes,'—looks on me with fierce, sparkling eyes, like an enraged lion, ready to pounce upon his prey.) The perverted view of God which Satan presents, and the flesh is ready to take under severe and protracted trouble. Sad that our best Friend should be viewed as a relentless foe,—that the God who is love, should be converted into a furious wild beast or a wrathful demon. Such a view on the part of Job Satan's especial object at present. His aim to bring him to curse God to His face. Satan but showed *himself* to Job, and sought to pass himself off for God. The bitterest ingredient in a believer's trials, when not love but anger is apprehended in them. To see love in a cross takes out all bitterness; to see wrath, adds poison to the dart. David's prayer—"Rebuke me, [but] not in thine anger, chasten me, [but] not in thy hot displeasure" (Ps. vi. 1).

4. *The bitter hostility of his friends* (verse 10). "They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me" (as conspirators, to effect my ruin; or, "they have attacked me with combined forces"). Terribly bitter cup when both God and man—especially our friends and professedly good men—seem to be turned against us. The cup given to Jesus as our Surety. The words of the first clause of the verse those of the Psalm which describes His experience on the cross (Ps. xxii. 13). His cheek literally smitten, according to the prophecy (Mic. v. 1; Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30; John xix. 3). Jews and Gentiles, rulers and people, were gathered together against Him (Acts iv. 27; (Ps. ii. 12). Man's combined opposition, joined to a frowning providence, no proof either of guilt or Divine displeasure. David's prayer: "Let them curse, but bless thou" (Ps. cix. 28).

5. *His apparent abandonment by God into the hands of wicked men* (verse 11). "God hath delivered me to the ungodly (*Heb.*, 'to an evil one'), and turned me

over (or, 'thrown me down headlong') into the hands of the wicked." His case, in his own view, like that of a criminal delivered over to the executioners of justice; or one cast into a gulf or dungeon, as the punishment of his crime. His friends appeared to him in the character, and as acting towards him the part, of wicked men. Job delivered by God into the hands of an "evil one" in a way that he was not then aware of. Possibly, however, some glimmering of the truth as to the immediate agent in his affliction. The doctrine of evil spirits, and of one prominent among them as their leader, not likely to have been unknown in Job's time. The tradition of man's temptation and fall widely spread and preserved in the line of Shem. No uncommon thing for a child of God to be for wise purposes left for a time in the hands of bad men and bad angels. Divine abandonment the bitterest ingredient in the Saviour's cup. The only thing that extorted a wail of sorrow from His lips (Matt. xxvii. 46). To be left in the hands of the wicked was itself a grievous affliction. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." To appear to be abandoned by God at the same time a fearful aggravation. The Surety actually delivered into the hands of Satan to be tempted, and of wicked men to be put to death (Matt. iv. 1; Acts ii. 23).

6. *The sad and sudden reverse in his experience* (verse 12). "I was at ease (—in tranquillity and prosperity), but he hath broken me asunder (or, in pieces, thoroughly crushed and smashed me as an earthen vessel); he hath also taken me by my neck [as a wild beast does his prey] and shaken me to pieces (—or, dashed me as on the ground, or against a rock), and set me up for his mark" (—to shoot his arrows at, as Saracenic conquerors sometimes did with their captives, and as his own soldiers did with Sebastian, the martyr of Gaul). Great and sudden reverses among the sorest earthly trials. The remembrance of previous comfort and prosperity an embittering of present calamity and suffering. Once none more happy and prosperous than Job; now none more afflicted and wretched. No greater contrast between past and present experience since Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise. Labours for words to express the grievousness of the latter. Employs words of double form and intensified meaning. "Broken me asunder," "shaken me to pieces." No mere hurt, but utter destruction, like that of a glass or an earthen vessel dashed to the ground, and smashed into a thousand pieces, no more to be united. Children gone; property lost; wife alienated; body covered from head to foot with the most grievous and loathsome disease that ever afflicted fallen humanity; mind harassed, depressed, distracted; sleep taken away; what sleep obtained made more wretched than the absence of it by horrifying dreams; his sincerity and piety more than suspected by his friends, in consequence of his sufferings; and his bruised spirit worried and irritated by their flippant and worldly arguments, to convince him that he must not be the man he had been taken to be, and that to be delivered from his troubles he must repent and seek God. And of all these overwhelming reverses, God Himself, whom he had diligently and faithfully served, the Author! High and important object that for which God could do such violence to His nature in thus dealing with a faithful servant! Transcendently glorious end in view, when He still more terribly bruised His faithful and well-beloved Son!

7. *A tragically sublime enlargement on his treatment at the Divine hand* (verse 13). "His archers (or 'his mighty ones,' perhaps 'his darts'—the many calamities with which God had visited and was still visiting him) compass me round about: he cleaveth my reins asunder (—attacks me in the most vital parts, and inflicts on me deadly wounds), and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground" (—His strokes of the most fatal kind, leaving no hope of life). No pity shewn in dealing with His servant, but all kinds of severity inflicted. Sometimes God appears to lay aside His attribute of mercy, even in dealing with His own. So in visiting Jerusalem for her sins: "Thou hast not pitied" (Lam. iii. 43). Thus God "spared not his own Son."—(Verse 14). "He breaketh me with breach upon breach;"—is continually dealing new blows, like a storming party attacking the walls of a fortress—is always inflicting new griefs. So David's complaint: "Deep calleth unto deep; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me,"—one after another in rapid succession" (Ps. xlii. 7). One severe trial often found almost sufficient to crush us. Ordinarily, "in the day of the rough wind," He "stayeth the east wind." Rarely, as with Job, are heavy strokes repeated, successive, and accumulated. Such, however, the experience of Jesus in the last hours of His earthly life. From the traitor's kiss to His dying cry upon the cross, "bruised and put to grief" by God, devils, and men; smitten in soul and body with one wound after another, till at last reproach broke His heart, and He was brought to the dust of death. And all this, while standing in your place, reader, and mine.—"He runneth upon me like a giant," or, "as a warrior," sword in hand, with strength and fury. Appalling climax! Terrible experience for a

child of God. Awful situation of an impenitent and Christless soul. "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

8. *The effect of this severity on the part of God* (verse 15). "I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin." Sackcloth, a garment of coarse cloth worn by mourners and penitents. Probably assumed by Job after the death of his children, and continued ever since. Worn next to the person, and now adhering to his skin through the purulent matter issuing from his ulcers. God's providence able very soon to change our silk into sackcloth. —"And defiled (or thrust) my horn in the dust,"—like a noble animal spent with fatigue or overpowered in conflict. Job now literally in the dust. His place still among the ashes. His condition one of the deepest misery. His experience that of sorrow and humiliation. The horn an emblem of strength and dignity. Job, as a prince or emir, naturally speaks of his "horn." Easy with God to bring the loftiest horn to the dust. Witness Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, Wolsey, Masaniello, the fisherman-saviour of Naples. Soon "high ambition lowly laid." (Verse 16).—"My face is foul (or red) with weeping." Job no stoic. His eye poured out tears to God (verse 20). Manly to weep from a sufficient cause. Jesus wept. It is only sin which makes men callous and insensible. True religion neither makes men stones nor stoics. "Scorn the proud man that is ashamed to weep."—"And on mine eyelids is the shadow of death." A speedy dissolution anticipated as the result of his calamities and disease. The dimness of death already appearing to him to settle on his eyes. Now viewed himself as a dying man (ch. xvii. 1.) Figuratively also, deep and continued sorrow clouded his eyes as with the dimness of death. The effect of grief and tears on the sight frequently complained of in the Psalms (Ps. vi. 7; xxxi. 9; xxxviii. 10. See, also, Lam. v. 17). Faustus, son of Vortigern, said to have wept himself blind for the abominations of his parents.

III. Re-asserts his innocence and integrity (verse 17).

"Not for any injustice (or, 'although,'—or, connecting with what follows,—'because there is not any violence') in mine hands; also my prayer is pure." Maintains that his sufferings were neither on account of wrong done to his neighbour or hypocrisy towards God. The two charges alleged or insinuated against him by his friends. The gist of their speeches to shew that he must have made himself rich by oppression, or had abused his riches to the injury of his neighbour, and that the justice of God now overtook him for his crimes. This conduct towards man necessarily implied that his profession of religion towards God had been false and hollow. Job maintains, like Paul, that he had exercised himself in having a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man. "Prayer" here put for religion or religious duties in general—his duty towards God. A great part of religion consists in prayer or in communion with the Father of our spirits. Divine worship an approach of the soul to the mercy-seat. Job a man of prayer, contrary to the allegation of his friends (ch. xv. 4). A prayerless man is a man without religion and without God. Job speaks of

Prayer

as a matter of course, as a thing *natural* for a man. As natural for a man to pray as for an infant to utter cries to its mother. The natural instinct of a babe towards its earthly parent a picture of that in a human soul towards its heavenly one. Because *natural*, prayer is *universal*. Prayer to Deity in some form or other the language of man wherever found. The most degraded still sometimes prays, and pays respect to prayer when offered by another. Prayer *a thing of the spirit*, unconfined to time, or place, or form. In prayer, however, as in other things, the spirit seeks *outward expression*—in the lips, and the posture of the body, as bended knees, uplifted hands, &c. Prayer either public, solemn, formal, or private,—in the family, the closet, everywhere. "I will that men pray *everywhere*." Nehemiah prayed in the glittering banquet-hall while presenting, according to his office, the wine-cup to his royal master. Especial prominence given in the Bible to *united* prayer (Matt. xviii. 19; Acts xii. 5, 12). Prayer to be made for *others* as well as for ourselves. Job an intercessor (ch. i. 5; xlii. 10). *Patterns for prayer* given everywhere throughout the Scriptures. Especially found in "*the Lord's Prayer*." The *first* part of this Divine form of devotion consists in three petitions for *God* himself—for God's glory, His kingdom, and His pleasure; the second part, in the remaining four, for *ourselves* and our *neighbour*. Of these four, the first is for *temporal* benefits; the second and third for *spiritual* ones; and the fourth and last, for *both combined*.

Job declares that his prayer was "*pure*." Prayer "pure" when offered with a sincere heart and pure conscience. More particularly—

1. When *not in hypocrisy* or "out of feigned lips"; when with the *heart* and not

merely the lip or outward posture (Is. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8).

2. When *not accompanied with the practice of sin.* The sacrifice of the wicked an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xv. 8; xxi. 27; xxviii. 9) "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. lxvi. 18). Men to lift up "*holy* hands."

3. When *for right objects* and *from right motives.* "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James iv. 3).

4. When *addressed to the only true God* (Ps. lxv. 2).

5. When presented *in a way according to His own will,* not through images or pictures, or with superstitious and humanly devised practices (Col ii. xviii. 22).

6. When offered *with right disposition and feelings,* with benevolence and forgiveness of injuries. "Lifting up holy hands, without *wrath*" (1 Tim. ii. 8). "When ye stand praying, forgive" (Mark xi. 25).

7. When made *with humility through the one Mediator, and with faith in His atoning sacrifice.* "To this man will I look who is poor and of a contrite spirit" (Is. lxvi. 2). "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "No man cometh to the Father but by me" (1 Tim. ii. 5; John xiv. 6). Boldness given to enter into the holiest of all by the *blood* of Jesus (Heb. x. 19).

IV. Apostrophizes the earth in an impassioned prayer that his innocence may be made manifest (verse 18).

"O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place" (of concealment, or hindrance in its access to God'). Perhaps connected with the preceding: "Because I am innocent, let this be the case.'" Job, as an undeserving sufferer, regards himself as one whose blood is innocently shed. Probable reference to Abel's murder (Gen. iv. 10, 11). The narrative or document containing it well known to Job. The shedder of Job's blood either the immediate agent in his sufferings, or his friends who so cruelly persecuted him. Murder easily and often committed without actual shedding of blood. Parents often murdered by the unkindness of their children, and wives by the harsh treatment of their husbands. Words and looks kill as well as blows. Blood shed inwardly as well as outwardly,—shed where no eye sees it but God's.

Job's prayer heard. His innocence and his friends' unkindness at length revealed. No innocent blood always covered. "Murder will out" and be revenged. The blood of the slaughtered Huguenots visited on Charles IX., who died in a bloody sweat, crying: "What blood! what blood!"—and still visited in the wars and revolutions of France. A day coming when the earth shall "disclose her blood,"—the blood innocently shed on it and kept by it against a future day, and shall "no more cover her slain" (Is. xxvi. 21). Earth covers innocent blood till God uncovers and revenges it. Arabs say the dew never rests on a spot that has been wet with it. The innocent blood of the crucified One still speaks in heaven. Led to the sacking and burning of Jerusalem, with the slaughter and dispersion of its people. Is still visited on the outcast impenitent shedders of it. Speaks pardon and peace to all who, as guilty, take refuge in it as their only atonement and hope.

The "cry" of the helpless and oppressed never unheard. No place on earth able to hide it from God. Enters from the most humble and wretched hovel into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (James v. 4).

V. Job's consolation (verse 19, 20).

1. *In God's consciousness of his innocence* (verse 19). "Also now (—besides the testimony of my own consciousness; or, 'even now,' in the midst of these calamities and sufferings), behold (—strange as you may deem my assertion) my witness (—he who can and will bear testimony to my innocence) is in heaven, and my record (—the eye-witness of my upright life) is on high." Job's integrity already testified to by God in a way he was not aware of. The comfort of the righteous under oppression, that God is witness not only of their suffering, but of their integrity. God's great all seeing eye the terror of the sinner, the comfort of the saint. The Eye-Witness in heaven will one day speak out on earth Matt. xxv. 31—45) A grievous trial for a good man to lie under suspicion of hypocrisy, especially with good men. His comfort in the record on high,—the Eye-Witness unseen, but seeing all.

2. *In his constant tearful waiting upon God* (verse 20). "My friends scorn me (*Heb.*, 'my mockers are my friends'), but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." One of Job's great trials, that those who should have befriended and comforted him only mocked him, by dealing in wordy harangues and persuasions to repent in order to deliverance from his overwhelming troubles. His comfort in being able to turn from them to God. While his ear was stunned with their unfeeling reflections, his eye was pouring out tears to Him in whom "the fatherless findeth mercy." A relief in trouble to be able to weep, much more in being able to weep to God. Tears wept to God do not scald, but cool. The misery of the world.

that they either do not weep in trouble, or do not weep to Him who is able both to pity and help them. Every tear wept to God put into His bottle. God's lachrymatory constantly filling with the tears of the sorrowful wept into His bosom. A day coming when each tear treasured up in it will sparkle as a gem in the mourner's crown. Prayers and tears the weapons of the saints. While the eye pours out tears to God, God pours in comfort and strength unto the soul. With God the eye pleads as effectually as the lips. The tearful eye an eloquent pleader when the tongue is unable to utter a word. Tears wept to God have a voice that He who sees them well understands. Those blessed troubles that open the sluices for tears to be poured out to God. Believers weep with their face to God, the world with their back to Him. Precious grace that enables a man to take his griefs and weep out his tears to God. The trouble that drives unbelievers farther from God is only driving a believer nearer to Him; as the wind that drives one mariner farther from home is wafting another nearer to it. The magnet, amid all the commotions of the earth, and sea, and sky, still keeps pointing to the north.

VI. His longing desire to have his case tried before God (verse 21).

"O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour" (or, 'O that a man might plead,' or simply as expressing the subject of his prayer,—'that a man,—viz., himself,—might plead with God as a son of man with his neighbour'). Job's constant desire, from a consciousness of his integrity, to plead his cause with God (ch. ix., 19, 32–35). His aim not to establish his *sinlessness*, but his *sincerity*. His desire not to plead with God in reference to his personal acceptance with Him, but in reference to the particular matter and cause of his present sufferings. It is our happiness that we have not to plead our case with God as righteous persons, but as sinners. Even Job unable to answer God for one of a thousand charges he could bring against him (ch. ix., 3). It is the comfort of the Gospel—(1) That a sinner does not need to plead with God in order to establish his righteousness; God justifies the *ungodly* who believe in His Son; (2) That receiving Christ as a Saviour we have one who constantly pleads for us. In Christ we have an Advocate who is God Himself while our Brother,—the Man who is Jehovah's Fellow (Zech. xiii. 7.) Our God-man Advocate pleads not our innocence, but His obedience unto death, as the ground of our justification. Exhibits before the Divine tribunal not our *tears*, but His own *blood*. Mentions in the plea not our works, but our faith in Himself.

The reason for Job's earnest desire (verse 22).—"When a few years are come (or 'for the years numbered to me,' or, 'my few years have come,' *i.e.*, to an end), then shall I go whence I shall not return." The apprehension of approaching death now always present with Job. His great desire that his cause might be tried and his innocence declared before he left this world. Elsewhere he comforts himself with the assurance that even if death should intervene, God would vindicate his character and manifest his innocence (ch. xix., 25—27). Natural to desire to see it done while living. Sad for a good man to die with a cloud of suspicion resting on his character.—Things which each ought to be earnest and diligent to have done before we go "whence we shall not return." (1) Our own acceptance with God made sure. (2) The salvation of our children secured. (3) Our family and affairs rightly ordered. (4) Peace and reconciliation sought with all men. (5) Duties towards our family, friends, and neighbours discharged. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles. ix. 10).

Solemn enquiry: "When a few years are come," where shall I be, and what shall be my place and experience? Like Job, I shall be done with a present world. Its joys and sorrows, its cares and anxieties, will have ceased with me for ever. Shall I be enjoying a better state? Have I a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Have I an interest in Christ, so as to be able to say: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?" Do I know that God is the strength of my heart now, and that He shall be my portion for ever? That He will guide me with His counsel while here, and afterwards receive me to glory? While my body is mouldering in the grave, shall my spirit be mingling in the songs of saints and seraphim before the throne? Am I already washed in the blood of the Lamb?

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTINUATION OF JOB'S REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

I. Bemoans his dying condition (verse 1).

"My breath is corrupt (or, 'my spirit or vital energy is destroyed'), my days are extinct (or, extinguished, as a lamp or taper whose flame is expiring), the graves are

ready for me" (or, the place of graves, or chambers of the tomb, are destined for me, —*Heb.*, 'are for me,' or, 'are mine'). Job takes a calm but gloomy view of his condition. Now views himself always as a dying man. Speaks the language of deep despondency. Vital powers exhausted. Energy of spirit broken. The lamp of life all but extinguished. His only expected home the grave. This mentioned now—(1) As his reason for desiring to have his case speedily tried and his character vindicated; (2) In opposition to the flattering prospect held out by his friends as the result of his repentance. Observe—

1. *Good for us frequently to take a calm view of our condition as mortal and dying men.* Philip of Macedon kept a person for the sole purpose of daily reminding him of his mortality. Sad to be surprised by the summons of death, like the rich fool (Luke xii. 20). A good man, able, like Job, to chant his own dirge, both in the midst of life's joys and sorrows.

2. *True in reference to each what Job says of himself—*

"The graves are ready for me."

(1) Death is *appointed* to us. The lot of all but those who shall be living at the Lord's appearing. The sentence of death entailed on Adam's offspring as well as himself (Rom. v. 12). Death an enemy which all have to meet. No discharge in that war. The grave the home appointed for all living. Death a visitor whom no wealth can bribe, no power resist, no artifice elude.—(2) Death is *near* to us. "But a step between me and death." Death or the Lord's appearing not far from each of us. The grave probably much nearer both to reader and writer than to Job, when uttering these words. Job after this lived a hundred and forty years. Our entire life probably not more than half this amount. "Where is to-morrow? In another world. For numbers this is certain." Death probably much nearer to us than we think. Uses to be made of this fact: —(i.) To make careful preparation for death. While the body enters the grave the spirit enters the invisible and eternal world. Prepare to meet thy God.—(ii.). To make right use of time while it lasts. Much to be done, and but a short time to do it in (Eccles. ix. 10).—(iii.). To sit loose to the things of a present world. The world to be used, but not abused or used eagerly as if our all (1 Cor. vii. 29). "Why all this toil for triumphs of an hour?"—(iv.). To examine faithfully our views and prospects in regard to the grave. How do I regard it? With comfort or with dread? Is the prospect of it a gloomy or a pleasant one? To the believer to die is gain, because to depart is to be with Christ. To Him, the grave is only "a dark lattice letting in eternal day," the avenue

> "To festive bowers,
> Where nectars sparkle, angels minister,
> And more than angels share."

Am I prepared for my final resting-place? Are my accounts made straight with God? Am I at peace with my Maker? Are my sins cancelled with the blood of Jesus?

II. Job complains of the conduct of his friends (verse 2).

"Are there not mockers (or mockings) with me? Doth not mine eye continue (*Heb.*, remain all night) in their provocation?" Cutting words and cruel reproaches not easily banished. What the eye sees and the ear hears by day, the thoughts dwell upon by night. Such, with Job, the unkind looks and bitter words of those who should now have been his comfort. These things now his "sorrowful meat" (ch. vi. 7) The conduct of his friends one great part of his affliction. "Man is to man the sorest, surest ill." Instead of sympathy to soothe his sufferings, Job had only scorn to aggravate them. Such painful experience, especially from friends, happily the lot of few sufferers. Yet that of the Man of sorrows standing in our room. Complained of by Him as one of his keenest trials (Ps. xxii. 7; Matt. xxvii. 39). "The contradiction of sinners against himself" mentioned as the burden of his sufferings (Heb. xii. 3). His heart broken by reproach (Ps. lxix. 20). In proportion to the sweetness of true friendship and sympathy in sorrow, is the bitterness of the want, and especially the *opposite*, of it. Friendship the "wine of life;" unkind reproaches from professed friends, especially in trouble, distilled wormwood.

III. Earnestly beseeches God to grant a speedy trial of his case (verse 3).

"Lay down now (or, 'give a pledge, I pray thee'; put me in a surety with thee (or, 'give,' or, 'be surety to me [in this controversy of mine] with thee,'—that thou wilt afford me a trial and act as a party); who is he that will strike hands with me?" (or, 'who else is there that will,' &c.,—that is able to enter into the controversy? or, who is there, when such a pledge is given me by Thee, that will enter into the controversy with me? I will challenge anyone to prove me a wicked dissembler). Always the great burden of Job's desire to have his case fairly tried. The result and evidence of his

conscious integrity. The most painful part of his suffering, that he was treated as a wicked man, and, in consequence of that treatment, was regarded as such by his friends. A good man's name more precious to him than life. The cutting taunt of David's enemies, and those of David's antitype in trouble, where is now thy God? (Ps. xlii. 10; Matt. xxvii. 41—43). Christ esteemed by His enemies, "stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted," as a man under God's displeasure, and suffering for his sins (Is. liii. 4). For the consolation of anxious souls, God has given what Job desired, His promise and His oath (Heb. vi. 17, 18). These given, not that they shall have their case tried, but that, on accepting Christ as their substitute and righteousness, they shall be accepted as righteous with God, just as they are. God Himself a surety to such that no evil shall befal them (Ps. cxix 122). David's comfort that God had made with him an everlasting covenant (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). Christ provided by God as the surety of that covenant (Heb. vii. 22). The Divine pledge that on receiving Him, no good thing shall be witheld from us (Rom. viii. 32).—The reason for Job's request (ver. 4) "For thou hast hid their heart from understanding (withheld from his friends the wisdom and intelligence necessary to qualify them for giving a right judgment in his case, or to make them successful parties in the controversy); therefore shalt thou not exalt them" (as righteous judges, or as those who have had the better in the case). A two-fold ground of Job's request for a fair trial of his case by God Himself—(1) The incapacity of his friends to judge in the matter; (2) His consciousness of his innocence, and that in the controversy he will gain the cause. Job called to wage a double controversy—(1) As against God, in His appearing to afflict him as a wicked man; (2) As against his friends, in their charging him with being such

Observe—

1. The highest "understanding" to judge correctly between right and wrong in principle and conduct, and rightly to interpret God's dealings and dispensations with men. No understanding as to moral and spiritual subjects, but as the gift of God. With God either to give or withhold this understanding (Matt. xi. 25). A measure of it given to all men (John i. 9). That measure capable of being increased or diminished. The increase or diminution according to the improvement made of it, and the means employed for increasing it. "To him that hath," &c. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."—The want of a clear and correct moral judgment the consequence of sin. A dim perception and unsound judgment in moral and spiritual things one of the natural, as well as judicial, effects of transgression. The most upright, not the most learned, the most capable of forming a correct judgment on great moral questions. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. "A good understanding have all they that keep thy testimonies."

2. The true "exaltation" that which comes from God (Ps. lxxv. 5—7; Dan. iv. 37). The possession and exercise of a sound moral judgment the ground of exaltation with God as of commendation with men (Prov. xii. 8). Prejudice and partiality in judging of an individual's state and character a serious ground of Divine displeasure. Harsh and uncharitable judgment of and conduct towards a faithful and suffering servant of His the object of His disapprobation. Hence—(1) The frequent denunciations in the Psalms in reference to David's enemies and persecutors; (2) The fearful judgments made to follow the Jewish nation for their treatment of God's righteous servant, their own Messiah. Job's friends not only not "exalted" by God, but deeply humbled and abased by Him in the end (ch. xlii. 7, 8). The enemies and persecutors of Christ and His cause ultimately clothed with shame (Ps. cxxxii, 18). A bad cause only for a time apparently triumphant. "*Magna est veritas*," &c.

IV. A denunciation against treacherous and unfaithful friends (verse 5). "He that speaketh flattery to his friends (or the man who betrays his friends to [become a] spoil or prey; who deserts and betrays his friends from selfish considerations) the eyes of his children shall fail;" his sin is so grievous in the sight of God that it shall be visited not only on himself, but on his children. The treacherous and unfaithful conduct of Job's friends already the subject of his sorrowful complaint (ch. vi. 15—27). Observe—(1) *Treachery and unfaithfulness on the part of professed friends one of the most cutting trials with men, and the most condemning sins with God.* These concentrated in the conduct of Judas Iscariot. The frequent complaint of David, and the painful experience of David's antitype (Ps. xli. 9, lv. 12; John xiii. 18). (2) *Some sins more heinous in themselves and more disastrous in their consequences than others.* (3) *Sin in many cases entails its consequences on a man's children as well as on himself.* Gehazi's sin followed by the infliction of Naaman's leprosy on himself and his pos-

terity for ever. On the other hand, the virtuous conduct of parents entails a blessing on their offsprings. So the faith of Abraham, the zeal of Phinehas, the piety of Obed-Edom. In the text, Job retorts upon his friends their cruel allusion to his children's calamity (ch. v. 4; viii. 4; xv. 30). Not only speaks according to the Old Testament platform, but announces a general law in God's moral government. The consequences of parents' sins upon their children often natural and in the ordinary course of Divine Providence; at the same time judicial, whatever may be the instrumentality or natural causes.

V. Returns to his own distressed condition.

His sufferings the cause of the suspicion resting upon his character. Mentions—

1. The *contempt* to which his circumstances exposed him (verse 6). "He (*i.e.* God—frequently spoken of without being named) hath made me also a by-word (or proverb) of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret" (or, "and I am become an object to spit before," or, "to spit at in the face"). Distressing contrast. Formerly the object of universal reverence and respect; now of public contempt and insult (ch. xxx. 10). To spit at or in the presence of another still a common mode of showing contempt among the Arabs. Mahommedans often thus exhibit their contempt of Christians. Trouble greatly aggravated by contrast with former prosperity. Contempt a bitter ingredient in a noble-minded man's cup of sorrow. A frequent subject of complaint in the Psalms (Ps. xxii. 6, 7; xxxv. 15, 16; lxix. 7, 11, 12, 19; cxxiii. 3, 4). The experience of the Man of Sorrows (Matt. xxvii. 28, 29, 41—44; Is. liii. 3). Jesus, like Job, spit upon by the rabble (Is. l. 6; Matt. xxvi 67; xxvii. 30).

2. The *effect of grief upon his physical frame* (verse 7). "Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members (or features) are as a shadow." The eye dimmed by weeping and nervous exhaustion. The emaciation consequent on protracted sorrow still more common. Grief preys on the whole frame. Digestive organs retarded in their operation; nutrition at a stand. Job's case (ch. xix. 20). David's complaint (Ps. xxii. 17). So the prophet representing the Jewish Church in its trouble (Ps. cii. 5; Lam. iv. 8). Job's trouble now of some continuance. The change in his appearance already such as to render him scarcely recognizable by his friends (ch. ii. 12). The Man of Sorrows, when little above thirty, spoken of as "not yet fifty years old" (John viii. 57). Job already a "by-word," or proverb, of suffering or sorrow. Probably regarded as an example of the justice of God overtaking a secret transgressor, and of the sudden overthrow of those who have made themselves rich. Similar experience of David as a type of the Messiah (Ps. lxix. 11). Job now for thousands of years a proverb of *patience*. His tears already gems. "Our sorrow the inverted image of our nobleness; perhaps, also, the measure of our sympathy" [*Carlyle*]. In Job three superlatives combined—nobleness of mind and character; trouble, with grief as its natural effect; patience, at least for a time, in enduring it.

VI. The contemplated effect of his sufferings on others.

This twofold—

1. *The encouragement of suffering innocence* (ver. 8). "Upright men shall be astonished at this [so aggravated is suffering in an innocent man, who yet maintains his integrity under it]; and the innocent [encouraged by my example] shall stir up himself against the hypocrite (or ungodly man)." Probably contemplates the effect, not merely of his suffering, but of the future public vindication of his character, at times confidently anticipated (ch. xix. 25—29; xxiii. 10). Hence, another reason for wishing a speedy decision of his case. Job's experience an encouragement to all suffering believers—(1) Not to be surprised if overtaken by signal affliction. God's dealings with His people often dark and mysterious. Suffering saints Asaph's perplexity (Ps. lxxiii. 10—15). (2) Not to wonder if subjected to misapprehension and suspicion even with good men. Job's antitype also an object of astonishment on account of unparalleled sufferings borne with unparalleled patience (Is. lii. 14; liii. 7) The support given to believers under suffering often an astonishment to themselves, as well as admiration to others. Astonishing trials bring astonishing consolations and deliverances. The anticipated result of Job's sufferings realized as long as there shall be suffering believers in the world. The encouragement of such one great object of the book. Job read by the early Church every year in Passion-week. The subject of frequent meditation with the Man of Sorrows—Job's great antitype. One means of building up his manhood and preparing him for patient suffering. Job the example of suffering patience especially for the Old Testament Church, as Jesus is for the New (Heb. xii. 2, 3. As the result of Job's sufferings, the pious should "stir up himself" against the profane, however prosperous in this world; not

against their persons, but their principles and practice. Saints to love the sinner but to hate and oppose his sin. Observe—(1) *The duty of believers to stir themselves up* (Is. lxiv. 7). Godliness requires energy and zeal for its maintenance and practice. This especially in times of persecution, of general backsliding and apostacy, or of prevailing lukewarmness and worldliness. No small matter to hold on against prosperous ungodliness. (2) *The effect of God's providential dealings with His church and people often very different from what is and might be expected.* God makes both the wrath of man and the sufferings of the saints—even their sins—to praise Him. The blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church. Hopeful's conversion due to Faithful's martyrdom. (3) *A mark of sincerity to take part with suffering piety.* The case of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Believers at Rome waxed confident through Paul's bonds (Phil. i. 14).

2. *Encouragement to perseverance in Godliness* (verse 9). "The righteous also shall hold (or take firm hold) on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." The example of perseverance in one an important means of promoting it in others. God's wisdom and kindness in providing such an example as Job at so early a period of the world. Men more influenced by example than abstract reasoning or simple precept. The value of biography. Hence the large proportion of the Bible occupied with the life and history of individuals. Patient suffering a powerful sermon.

Perseverance in Holiness

The great duty of believers. Not without strenuous effort. Much to discourage and oppose. The current of the world and the flesh to swim against. Principalities and powers to be resisted. Many adversaries. The epistle to the Hebrews written to strengthen believers to hold on their way. Perseverance the test of sincerity (1 John, ii. 19). "The path of the just as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." Promised to believers (Phil. i. 6). The source of it, the power of God; the means, faith (1 Pet. i. 5). God's printing done with fast colours. God able to keep His people, and as willing as He is able. Christ both the Author and Finisher of our faith. Believers not of them that draw back unto perdition (Heb. x. 39; xii. 2).

The godly, from Job's sufferings, not only to hold on their way, but to become "stronger and stronger" (Heb., "add strength"). Not only perseverance the duty and mark of believers, but

Growth.

Growth in holiness God's will—"Grow in grace." Provision made for it—"He giveth more grace." The object of Christ's advent that we "might have life, and have it more abundantly." Believers to be adding—"add to your faith virtue or courage, &c." "From strength to strength." Must either advance or retrograde. The character of those who grow—"He that is of clean hands." Clean hands the index and result of a clean heart. Hands only clean when washed by faith in the blood of cleansing. Growth necessary. New strength for new and sorer trials, new and harder duties, new and severer battles. Means of growth—(1) Waiting on the Lord in prayer and otherwise (Is. xl. 30, 31). (2) Converse with the word of God, the food of the soul (1 Pet. ii. 2). (3) Faith in Christ as our strength and life (Heb. xii. 2). (4) Fellowship with God's faithful servants, and especially Christ himself (Prov. xiii. 20). (5) Contemplation of Christ's glory. His character, and His cross (2 Cor. iii. 18). (6) Exercise and improvement of the grace already given—"To him that hath, &c." (7) Discipline of Divine providence. Strength of religious principle heightened by suffering and trial. Tried grace is growing grace. The more Israel were afflicted in Egypt, "the more they grew."

VII. Job's dismission of his friends (verse 10).

"But as for you all (contrasting them with the upright innocent persons just mentioned), do ye return and come now (return again, *i.e.*, to the discussion—spoken ironically; or, return and depart, *i.e.*, to your own home)." The reason of this dismission of them twofold:—

1. The *want of wisdom they had manifested.* "For I do not find one wise man among you." Want of capacity shown for the office they had undertaken. Had all proved themselves "miserable comforters," "physicians of no value." Had either applied bad remedies or misapplied good ones. Observe—(1) *Men to hold an office no longer than they exhibit capacity for it.* Preachers listened to only as long as they are able to produce "words of truth and soberness." (2) *Great pretension to wisdom often only covers the want of it.* Shallow streams make greatest sound. (3) *Wisdom required in ministering to minds diseased.* "He that winneth souls," and he that rightly comforts mourners, "is wise." A "wise man," one who can "show out of a good conversation (or life) his works with meekness of wisdom" (James iii. 13). Two kinds of wisdom: one, "earthly, sensual,

devilish;" the other "from above,—pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits." True wisdom is to know the truth and do it. To choose right ends, and seek them by right means. The wise man one who—(i.) Has understanding of God's character and ways, and is able to interpret them to others; (ii.) "knows both time and judgment;" "has understanding of the times;" and knows what both himself and others ought to do, and *does* it; (iii.) Faithfully and intelligently aims at the best interests of himself and his fellow men. True wisdom the gift of God, and to be asked in believing prayer (James i., 5, 6, 17; iii. 17). Christ made wisdom to those who are in Him (1 Cor. i. 30).

2. *The certainty and nearness of his own death which contradicted their promises of future prosperity* (verse 2). "My days (perhaps his *happy* ones) are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts (*margin* 'possessions') of my 'heart' (the purposes and hopes which he had fondly cherished,—probably, according to Job's character, having reference more to the welfare of others than himself; these all dashed to the ground by his calamities and approaching death). Observe—(1) *The part of a good man to form plans of usefulness for his fellow man;* (2) *Necessary not to defer the execution of such plans.* Sickness, trouble, and death may intervene to prevent their accomplishment. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." (Eccles. ix. 10). Hence the folly and unreasonableness of the friends' counsel and promises. Their attempt that of those who (verse 12) "change (or make) the night into day" (talking of future prosperity in such dark and hopeless circumstances); the light is short because of darkness (or, they make "the light near in the very presence of darkness,"—talk of light when there is only darkness and death; the same idea repeated according to Hebrew parallelism). Like that in the Proverbs, under another figure,—"As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart" (Prov. xxv. 20). *Words in order to be useful must be spoken in season.*

Re-asserts the certainty and nearness of his end, to show the vanity of his friends' counsel (verse 13). "If I wait (indulge, hope, or expection), the grave is mine house (the only home I can look for, instead of the pleasant and prosperous habitation you hold out to me); "I have made my bed in darkness" (have already taken possession of the tomb as my abode, by spreading my couch in its darkness). (Verse 14)—"I have said to corruption (or 'the pit,' *i.e.*, of the grave), Thou art my father (as being now betrothed to death, and so made a member of his family), and to the worm (that preys upon the lifeless corpse—an idea frequent in Arab poetry), Thou art my mother and sister" (as already allied to the sepulchral household). (Verse 15).—And where is now (or where is then) my hope (the hope you counsel me to entertain); as for my hope, who shall see it?" (such a hope would be soon quenched in death without any seeing its realization). (Verse 16)—"They (or it, viz., my hope) shall go down to the bars of the pit (to the gates or chambers of the grave), when our rest together is in the dust" (or, "it [or we] shall lie down together in the dust," my hopes should be buried with myself in the grave). Observe.—

1. *The grave viewed by a believer with calmness and with comfort.* To such, a home or resting place, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." To a believer, death is "of all pain the period, not of joy."

> "Death is the privilege of human nature,
> And life without it were not worth the taking."

Relationship with the grave (i.) of an *endearing* kind. In a sense, our father, mother, and sister. Contains the dust of some of our dearest friends. A husband or a wife, a parent or a child; these give the grave a in regard to it. Contains the bodies of a home-like aspect, and inspire a home-feeling believer's brethren and sisters, while heaven contains their spirits. (ii.) Of a *humbling* kind. Man himself a worm, sprung from the same ground. Worms the companions and sharers of his final resting place. Worms his future guests who shall feed upon himself.

2. *Man's duty to guard against delusion in the matter of his hope.* Good to ask with Job

What is my hope?

The hope of many, only such as to be buried with them in the same grave. Such the case if our hope is only of an earthly nature, or resting on a false foundation.

> "Who builds on less than an immortal base,
> Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death."

Our hope may be either a cable or a cobweb; may either rest on solid rock or yielding sand. The believer's hope is—(i.) "a good hope," as having (*a*) a good *object*—the heavenly inheritance; (*b*) a good *foundation*,—Christ himself and his finished work. (ii.) A "*lively* hope," as one that shall survive the grave. Having Christ "as our hope," we plant our foot on the grave and sing our pæan over it: O grave where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?

CHAPTER XVIII.

BILDAD'S SECOND SPEECH.

Bildad the bitterest and most hostile of the three friends. No speech as yet so insolent and provoking. Full of fiery scathing denunciation against—the wicked—intending, of course, its application to Job, without even the exhortation or promise to repentance.

I. His introduction. Contains only angry and vehement reproof. Reproves Job—

1. For his *loquacity and captiousness* (verse 2). "How long will it be ere ye make an end of words (or how long will ye lay snares for words?) mark (*Heb.* 'understand,' *i.e.*, consider, *viz.*, our arguments; perhaps, 'be temperate,' or 'speak clearly'), and afterwards we will speak" (or, "that afterwards we may speak"). Bildad's language and tone not only passionate but contemptuous. "How long will *ye*," &c., instead of "*thou*." A great part of wisdom is to govern one's temper. "A fool's wrath is presently known; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Yet a wise man, from the weakness of human nature, may allow himself to be surprised into angry and contemptuous words. True wisdom characterized by meekness and gentleness—"meekness of wisdom." The tongue and temper never more in need of a bridle than in a controversy. Easy to lose a religious spirit in a religious dispute. Christ, incarnate wisdom, a model in controversy—calm, patient, loving; always "meek and lowly;" reviled, without reviling again. Bildad impatient of Job's reproof and depreciatory remarks in reference to his and his friends' speeches. Represents Job as only catching at words; as like those Jews who "lay in wait for Jesus, seeking to catch something out of His mouth, and to entangle Him in His talk." Observe—(1) *Passion is seldom truthful.* (2) *Loss of temper generally proves weakness in argument.* Consciousness of truth gives calmness in dispute. To bully an opponent is to confess yourself beaten. (3) *Patience and courtesy always due to an adversary.*

2. For his *pride and contempt* (verse 3). "Wherefore are we counted as beasts (ignorant and brutish), and reputed vile in your sight?" Too much ground given in Job's language for Bildad's reproof. His spirit broken by trouble, and exasperated by their unfeeling, unjust, and deceitful conduct, Job had treated his friends with too much severity and contempt. Bildad particularly stung by Job's contemptuous language in ch. xvii. 4, 10. Observe—(1) "*Grievous words*" *to be avoided, as always stirring up anger.* In controversy, hard things apt to be said, and to be made harder than they are. (2) *Man's moral as well as physical 'goodliness as the flower of the field.'* Job not always able to answer with the "meekness of wisdom," as in ch. ii. 10.

3. For his *passion* (verse 4). "He teareth himself (or, 'he that teareth himself,' or, 'thou that tearest thyself') in his anger." Job represented as a raging maniac. Probably too much foundation for the remark. Anger, according to a heathen sage, a short madness. Job's appearance and demeanour probably that of a man not only deeply distressed but greatly excited. "Oppression maketh a wise man mad." Arabs usually grave, solemn, unperturbed; yet capable of great excitement. Held highly discreditable for a good man to allow himself to be in a passion. Passion always injurious to the subject of it, both spiritually and physically. "He teareth *himself* in his anger;" *Heb.*, "he teareth *his soul*." Wrathful dispositions, says a Greek poet, are justly most painful to the parties themselves. "Wrath killeth the foolish man" (ch. v. 2).

4. For his *self-conceit.* "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?" More bitter words. Cruel and unfeeling as addressed to a crushed and afflicted man. Proverbial expressions with the Arabs in reproving pride and arrogance. Reference to Job's wish for a trial of his case by God, and his complaint of undue severity. Seemed as if he expected some special dispensation in his favour. The government of the world not to be abandoned for the sake of any individual's concerns. The Almighty not to go out of the way of his usual procedure to meet any man's wishes. The course of nature and the principles of the Divine government not to be arrested for any one's special accommodation. For any to think so implies vain conceit of his own importance. Yet Job's wish and complaint excusable. His circumstances peculiar. His treatment not in accordance with God's ordinary procedure, and with the consciousness of his own character. Bildad's questions founded in ignorance. Unnecessary

for God to neglect the government of the universe, or contravene the course of nature, in order to attend to the concerns of an individual. Such attention a part of that government. The fall of a sparrow, as well as of an empire, included in God's providence. Numbers the hairs of our head equally with the stars of the firmanent. Man, in ignorance or forgetfulness, transfers his own weakness and limitation to God's Almightiness and infinity. The Divine government based on unchanging principles. Judgment and justice the habitation of God's throne. Impossible and unnecessary to depart from these principles to meet any particular case. "God is a rock—His work is perfect; a God of truth and without iniquity." God Himself, and the principles of His government, an immovable rock. His own unchangeableness, and that of His "immortal government," the foundation of His people's confidence.

II. Body of the Speech. Describes the experience and fate of the wicked (verse 5--20).

A favourite subject with these wise men in their dealing with Job. The object to terrify him into a penitent acknowledgment of guilt and supplication for forgiveness. The description meant to depict Job's circumstances, and so to suggest, if not prove, his guilt. This and those similar ones in ch. viii. 11—22, and ch. xv. 20—25, probably recitations from the ancients, or the productions of the inspired poet, the author of the book. Extemporary versification, however, a highly valued accomplishment among Arab poets and philosophers. The object of Satan in these horrifying descriptions to irritate Job to cast off his religion in despair, as of no use to him. The class described—that of hardened transgressors, secret or open, who had enriched themselves by oppression or abused their power to the injury of others—men who neither feared God nor regarded men. Job notoriously the reverse. Hence the mystery. The solution, according to the friends, in the secret iniquity of his heart and life. Job himself, conscious of his integrity, perplexed and distressed, and longing for a Divine explanation which should vindicate his character. Hence his occasional excitement and apparently extravagant language. Had to fight against appearances, manifest facts, and popular belief, or to confess himself a bad man. His outward and inward experience seldom, if ever, found except in notorious transgressors. Probably more frequent *then* than now. The following a highly-wrought picture, full of tragically sublime poetry. One image of horror followed by another still more terrific. The description that of a guilty man chased by the avenging justice of God—the Furies of the Greeks. The elements in the description—

1. *Great reverse in circumstances* (verse 5). "Yea (notwithstanding your complaint; or 'also,' take another description of the fate of the ungodly), the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark (or flame) of his fire shall not shine." Perhaps more than a mere figure for the extinction of his prosperity and affluence. Probable allusion to the practice of rich Arabs kindling, towards evening, a fire in the neighbourhood of their dwelling, to invite and direct travellers to their hospitality. Such fires the glory of a wealthy Arab. Mark of the deepest adversity when no longer sustained. A frequent allusion in Arab poetry—

> "Now by deepest want oppress;
> Though once my hospitable light
> Was blest by travellers at night."—
> *Hariri.*

Job's fires of hospitality also now extinguished. (Verse 6).—"The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle (or lamp) shall be put out with him" (or "over him;" Arab houses and tents always having a lamp burning during the night, that of the principal apartment hanging from the ceiling or from the centre of the tent; hence the lamp a figure for prosperity and happiness, its extinction indicating utter desolation). Death and misfortune darken the dwelling. Job's present bitter experience. The experience of most at times. Only Jehovah himself an "an everlasting light." Is so to His people, even in the midst of trouble. "When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Mic. vii. 8).

2. *Removal of power and dignity* (verse 7). "The steps of His strength (his steps formerly strong, as of a man in full health, prosperity, and power) shall be straitened" (confined as of a man in chains or imprisonment, or suffering from personal affliction). Image taken from a noble lion caught in the toils, and now lying prostrate. Picture of the contrast between Job's former and present condition. For his former "steps" see ch. xxix. 6, 7. Now lying on an ash-heap. Steps of strength soon changed into the feebleness of disease. Plans the most likely to succeed, often, in Divine providence, impeded and rendered abortive. The misfortune of the wicked referred to their own sin as the cause. "His own counsel shall cast him down." The lion caught in the toil when wandering about for prey. The wicked "snared in the work of their own hands." Pharaoh's counsel against Israel his own destruction. Cruel thrust at Job as a secret transgressor now caught in the midst of his ill-gotten gains.

3. *Sudden and accumulated calamity* (verse 8). "He is cast into a net by his own feet. (entangled with his feet in a net); he walketh upon a snare (walks unconsciously into a pit fall). The gin (or trap) shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him (or, 'the snare lays hold upon him,' so that he is unable to escape). The snare (or cord) is laid (or hidden) in the ground for him, and a trap for him in the way." Image of a wild beast caught by the various stratagems of the hunter. Men's calamities, especially those of the impenitent transgressor, often sudden. "As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falleth suddenly upon them (Eccles. ix. 12; see also Luke xxi. 34—35, and Thess. v. 3). The worst troubles those which come unforeseen. Job's actual circumstances. Overtaken by sudden calamities in the very heyday of his prosperity. Variety of expression in the text to indicate the certainity and terribleness of the doom. "He who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare" (Is. xxiv. 17, 18).

5. *Inward terrors* (verse 11). "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet." The terrors of an awakened and alarmed conscience among the consequences of persistent sin. Such terrors known in every land as overtaking the secret or notorious transgressors. "Who intent on evil ways will be able to defend his mind against the darts of conscience?" [*Sophocles*]. God's scourge in the sinner's own bosom. No rest or peace under its lashes. Attempts made to escape these "terrors," but in vain. All flight ineffectual except flight through the cross. The terrors of conscience only quenched in the atoning blood of Christ. Job distressed at present by the "terrors of God," but not those of an evil conscience (ch. vi. 4).

6. *Dreadful disease* (verse 12, 13). "His strength shall be hunger-bitten (famished; or, 'his disease shall be voracious'), and destruction shall be ready at his side (or, 'prepared for his side,' or body,—ready to devour him). It shall devour the strength of his skin (the firm members of his body); even the first-born of death (one of the most dreadful of mortal diseases) shall devour his strength" (or, "prey upon his powerful limbs.") Disease, with its feebleness and emaciation, personified as the executioner of Divine vengeance—the hungry hound of justice. Disease the result of sin; and often inflicted as a chastisement on the good and a punishment on the bad. Herod, the persecutor, seized and devoured by one of these dogs of vengeance in the midst of his pride and splendour (Acts xii. 21—23). Job's terrible disease also, a "first-born of death," to all appearance, and in the thought of his three friends, preying on him as a guilty transgressor. No creature, animate or inanimate, but may be made the instrument of Divine justice in punishing obstinate and impenitent offenders. Creatures, animal or vegetable, invisible to the naked eye, often the cause of most dreadful diseases. Cholera and the plague among the "first-born of death."

7. *Utter want and desolation* (verse 14, 15). "His confidence (whatever he trusted in—wealth, power, family) shall be rooted out of his tabernacle (utterly, violently, and for ever removed, as a tree torn up by the roots), and it shall bring him to the king of terrors (or, 'terrors like a king shall urge him forward'). It (the terror or desolation) shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his; brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation" (as that of a man lying under Divine wrath, or as a place doomed to a perpetual curse; made, like the Cities of the Plain, a monument of Divine vengeance). "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit (Prov. xviii. 11). This implied to have been Job's case. Expressly denied, however, by him (ch. xxxi. 24). Such confidence to be rooted out, as his now appeared to be. Chaldeans, Sabeans, and the fire of God had left only a single servant to carry the tale. Terror and desolation, like a victorious and relentless general, had marched him out of his strong city, to sit like a captive among the ashes. Observe—(1) "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." A man's house is his castle, but is unable to hold out against the judgments of God. Chaldeans and Sabeans only God's instruments in stripping a man of his ill-gotten wealth, and sending him out of a dwelling to which he has no just right. (2) Alas for him of whom it is to be said: "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches" (Ps. lii. 7). The lightning that strikes down his cattle as truly God's messenger as the brimstone that was scattered on the houses of Sodom and Gomorrha. (2.) *Death emphatically a "king of terrors" to the impenitent.* The terrors of death only to be dissipated by faith in Him who "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

8. *Ruin of family and estate* (verse 16—19). "His roots shall be dried up beneath

(as under the influence of a mighty curse), and above his branch shall be cut off." His property and family alike annihilated by divine judgments. The narrative in Chap. i., a mournful commentary on this verse. Job's case apparently the doom of the wicked; destroyed "root and branch" (Mal. iv. 1). "He shall be driven from light into darkness (violently driven away out of life and luxury into death and despair), and chased out of the world (as a malefactor not fit to live). He shall neither have son nor nephew (or progeny) among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings (either as relations to inherit his estate, or dependents who had been supported by his bounty). His remembrance shall perish from the earth (or the land), and he shall have no name in the street" (in the places of concourse in the city, or in the fields among shepherds and husbandmen). The great desire among the godless rich to make themselves a name, and perpetuate their memory and their family in the world. "They call their lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11). But "the memory of the wicked shall rot." Only the righteous are worthy to be, and shall be, "held in everlasting remembrance." Job formerly the greatest man in the East, and his praise in everybody's mouth. Now likely soon to be forgotten, and his name never to be mentioned but with a shudder. So his friends thought. But Job was not a wicked man, and a different fate awaited him. His patience and piety have diffused a fragrance throughout the world. His name one of the brightest constellations in the firmament of Holy Scripture.

9. *An astonishment and horror to contempories and posterity* (verse 20). "They that come after him (succeeding generations, or 'those in western regions') shall be astonished at his day (his history, and the awful fate that overtook him), as they that went before (his contempories, or 'those in eastern regions'), were affrighted." Men in opposite quarters of the world, and even future generations should be struck with horror at his secret or open wickedness, and the terrible doom that followed it. Sufficiently harrowing to poor Job, who might see his present experience pourtrayed in the description. His calamities already a matter of astonishment and horror, as they have been in all ages—(1) For their terribleness and extent; (2) Their unlikeliness to happen to such a man; (3) Their suddenness; (4) The rapidity with which they followed each other; (5) Their singularity and unusualness; (6) Their contrast with his former prosperity; (7) The mark they bore of the Divine anger, notwithstanding his pious and upright character. Job already a byword by his own confession. Awful prospect of what would be the case hereafter, unless God vindicated his character in time. Oppression in all this description sufficient to drive a wise man mad. Observe—(i.) Satan terribly skilful in the means he employs to allure a man to his ruin, or goad him to despair. (ii.) Blessed proof of the reality of religion, that Job, notwithstanding all this, still held fast his integrity. (iii.) God's thoughts in regard to his people not as man's thoughts. Job's sufferings have thrown around his name a halo of imperishable glory, while man thought they would only surround it with horror.

III. Conclusion of the speech.

Bildad clenches the terrible description with an emphatic application, by which Job was to appropriate it to himself, or at least to take warning from it. "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God." This with Job's desolate dwelling before his eyes! Not always true, however, in this life. Bad men not always haunted with terrors and tracked with misfortunes in this world. All the worse, however, if the vengeance is deferred to another. Awful picture presented in this description, of the experience awaiting the impenitent transgressor in a future state. The New Testament, as well as the Old, declares that "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Righteous vengeance to overtake all that "know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ." To sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth is to bring down a fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

Bildad's vehemence, however, overshot itself. His closing sentence such as unintentionally to bring consolation rather than despair. Conscience could whisper,—Thou art *not* the man. Job neither wicked nor one who knew not God. This certain to himself, though perhaps more than doubtful to his vehement assailant. Observe:—(1) *Certainty as to our character and standing needful to bear up against Satan's terrible blasts.* The scathing storm of Bildad's fiery denunciations keenly felt, but Job conscious he was a child and servant of God. (2) *Blessed to be able, amidst Satanic buffetings, still to cling to God as a Father.* (3) *The believer safe even in the pelting of the most pitiless storm.* The righteous in Christ is an 'everlasting foundation,' which floods of temptations and hellish assaults are unable to sweep away. The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. That name blessedly known to Job (ch. xix. 25). Is it so to the reader?

CHAPTER XIX.

JOB'S REPLY TO BILDAD'S SECOND SPEECH.

This chapter the crowning part of the controversy. Both in form and in fact the centre of the whole book. Like the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the jewel in the ring. Job's faith soars like an eagle through clouds and tempests into the open heaven, and gazes for a few moments on the sun. The culmination of all the preceding conflict. What follows of a considerably different character. Job afterwards descends again into the arena, but much more tranquillised in spirit.

I. His complaint of his friends' continued reproaches and unkind treatment.

Their treatment of him was—1. *Distressing* (verse 2). "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces ('bruise or pound me as in a mortar') with words (unkind and reproachful words, or with speeches and recitations which contain only words instead of arguments)?" The bruising of Job's sorrowful spirit the natural effect of his friends' speeches; especially of their long-drawn and highly-coloured quotations about the fate of the wicked. Job put down in them for a wicked man, suffering the righteous consequence of his sins, and threatened with still more dreadful ones. Bruised in soul by his friends' words, as in body by Satan's blows. His internal afflictions thus made to rival his external ones. More grievously robbed by his friends than by either Chaldeans or Sabeans. Worse to be robbed of our peace and good name than of our property. "Who steals my purse steals trash." The experience of David, or whoever wrote Psalm cxix: "Bands of the wicked robbed me" (Ps. cxix. 61). Reproach the bitterest of Christ's sufferings, next to the hiding of His Father's face (Ps. lxix. 20). Job's affliction reaches its height in this chapter, as also his faith and his consolation. Observe—(1.) *Truth misapplied as mischevious as error.* (2.) *A sin not to soothe affliction; a still greater one to aggravate it.* A high offence in God's sight, to "talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded" (Ps. lxix. 26). The part of the wicked, to "help forward the affliction" of God's suffering people (Zech. i. 15).

2. *Persistent* (verse 3). "These ten (many) times have ye reproached me." Each of the three friends had now attacked him, and two of them a second time. Their speeches all partaking of the same reproachful character Their harshness and vehemence only increased as they advanced. The complaint of David as typical of the Messiah, "Reproach hath broken mine heart" (Ps. lxix. 20).

3. *Shameless.* "Ye are not ashamed." A sin to act harshly to any; a shame to act harshly to the afflicted; still more shameful when the afflicted one is a friend. An aggravation of any sin when it is committed without shame.

4. Their treatment was *cruel.* "Ye make yourselves strange to me," *margin*, "harden yourselves against me"; or, "treat me cruelly;" or, "stun me" [with your reproaches]. Unfeeling conduct towards a friend held base even among the heathen. The light of nature teaches that "he who hath friends, must show himself friendly." The effect of false religious views, to render men cruel and unfeeling towards others. Religious persecutions especially malignant. True religion a religion of gentleness and love. The more of it, the more gentle and loving. The more of a false religion, the more cruel and unfeeling. Herod put one or two of Christ's disciples to death because it pleased the Jews: Saul, with more religion, kept "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against them" (Acts xii. 1—3; ix. 1).

II. He wards off their reproaches. Does so with three considerations—

1. *That he suffers, alone, the effect of his error, if he has committed any* (verse 4). "And be it indeed that I have erred ('gone astray' from God and His commandments), mine error (in the consequences of it) remaineth with myself." *Sufficient to a man to suffer the effect of his error, without his having to bear the additional pain of reproach.* The reproach of friends often harder to bear than the violence of enemies.

2. *That his offence, if committed, was an unconscious one.* "Mine error." Marked difference made in the law between sins committed presumptuously or deliberately, and those committed in error or ignorance. Job's among the latter. Such found in the best. "Who can understand his errors?" Yet even then calling for humiliation, and requiring the blood of atonement. One object of affliction to bring sins of ignorance to

our consciousness in order to their confession. Many, perhaps most, of our sins, like letters written with invisible ink and requiring the fire to bring them to view; or, like the characters traced with phosphorus, only made visible in the dark chamber of trouble. Cleansing to be sought "from secret faults" (Ps. xix. 12).

3. *That his afflictions were from the hand of God* (verse 5). "If, indeed, ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me, my reproach (make my calamities which you reproach me with an argument to prove my guilt; or, prove to me my reproach, that I am guilty and suffer deservedly), know now (on the contrary, or, as a thing I fully admit, but which ought to move your pity), that God hath overthrown me (hath thrust me down and brought me low, doing it of His own free will and pleasure, without reference to any guilt of mine as the cause), and hath compassed me with His net" (as a hunter the animal that he wishes to take). Bildad had said the wicked are entangled in a net: Job admits he was taken in a net; but that net was God's. Observe:—(1.) *A Godly man sees and acknowledges God in his troubles, as well as in his triumphs.* In the friends' view, as well as Job's, his afflictions from God; the difference, that in theirs, they were *retributive;* in his, arbitrary and mysterious. This pleaded by Job as a reason for their pity and more gentle treatment. Enough for *God* to lay on His hand, without man adding his also.—(2.) *That our afflictions are from God may be either an alleviation or an aggravation.* An *alleviation,* when there is faith in His Fatherly love; an *aggravation,* when there is only apprehension of His wrath. The hand of a loving Father seen in our trouble takes away its sting; the apprehension of His anger exasperates the wound. —(3.) *Sin, and not suffering, is itself a "reproach."* Suffering no reproach, but as the effect of sin. "Sin, a reproach to any people."

4. *That he can obtain no redress from God* (verse 7). "Behold, I cry out of wrong (of violence done to me in these afflictions sent without any guiltiness as the cause), but I am not heard: I cry aloud (from intensity of suffering and earnestness to be heard), but there is no judgment" (no impartial trial afforded of my case, and no redress of my wrongs). One of the hardest things spoken by Job in regard to God. Seemed to charge God foolishly. Even Moses, the meekest man on earth, "spake unadvisedly with his lips." One of the sayings for which Job was at last reproved by God, and for which he humbled himself in dust and ashes. Yet the language in a sense true, though both rash and irreverent. According to God's own testimony, Job was "destroyed without cause" (ch. ii. 3). Job correct as to the fact itself; *not* correct as to the conduct he ascribes to God in the matter. God might have, as He actually had, the holiest, kindest, wisest, best reasons for treating, or allowing others to treat, him as He did. But to ascribe wrong or violence to his Creator was only the suggestion of his Adversary, and enough to bring Job, as it did afterwards bring him, to the dust. Job's language sinfully presents God in the view of the unjust judge in the parable. Observe —(1.) *God's outward dealings not always the criterion of His character or His heart.* Seems at times to wink at the sins of His enemies and to disregard the cry of His friends. May, however, bear long with His people, but in the end will avenge them. Their part to believe this, and still to cry and wait on (Luke xviii. 1—8). (2.) *God's silence to His people's cry one of their greatest trials.* Experienced by David and by David's Antitype (Ps. xxii. 1, 2).

III. Enlarges on God's severe treatment of him (verse 8—19). Specifies—

1. *His bringing him into inextricable straits* (verse 8). "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths." Describes his troubles—(1) Externally; as of the nature of an impassable fence. By the character of his disease, excluded from society and confined to his ash-heap. His disease an incurable one. All his troubles apparently irremediable. (2) Internally; his mind full of darkness and confusion. Saw no way of escape. Acknowledges that "the steps of his strength" were "straitened," but straitened by *God,* for what cause he knew not. Observe—One usual way in which God afflicts and tries His people is to bring them into straits, out of which they can find no escape. Hedges up their way that they cannot find their paths (Hos. ii. 6; Lam. iii. 7; Ps. lxxxviii. 8). Thus shuts them up to Himself—(i.) to humble submission to Him; (ii.) to entire dependence upon Him.

2. *His so deeply humbling and abasing him* (verse 9). "He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head." Similar complaint in ch. xvi. 15. The change in his circumstances here ascribed directly to God. The Chaldeans and Sabeans, the fire and the whirlwind, and finally, the loathsome leprosy itself, only God's instruments. Observe—(1) *The part of faith and piety, to view all our adversities, whatever the instruments, as coming from God himself* (Ps. lxvi. 11, 12; lxxi. 20). (2) *All earthly "glory," such as a man can be stripped of by Divine Providence,*—

children, friends, wealth, fame, influence, rank. That only the true "glory" of which a man cannot be stripped, even by death itself. God himself the believer's unfading glory (Isaiah lx. 19). (3) *The brightest earthly crown such as may, like Job's, be suddenly laid in the dust.* The poorest believer the heir of "a crown that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. v. 4). A man's crown, whatever is his ornament and honour. For Job's earthly crown, read ch. xxix.

3. *His utterly extirpating him and blighting his hopes* (verse 10). "He hath destroyed me ('plucked me up') on every side, and I am gone; and mine hope he hath removed like a tree." The figure that of a tree thoroughly torn up by the roots. Job's case, both in regard to person and progeny, property and position. All his expectation of comfort, prosperity, and usefulness hopelessly blasted. For his hope, see chap. xxix. 18. The frustration of his hopes, a part of his trial (chap. xiv. 19; xvii. 11). Hard to give up our hopes and see our expectations blasted. All earthly hopes liable to disappointment. Job's previous condition and character such as might warrant such hopes, if any could.

4. *His treating him as an enemy* (verse 11). "He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies." Job had lived, like Abraham, as the "friend of God;" had experienced his friendship and familiarity (chap. xxix. 4, 5); had, like Enoch, "walked with God," and sought to please Him (chap. vi. 10). Intensely trying to be now treated by Him as an enemy (chap. xiii. 24). Yet God's secret testimony of him: "My servant Job." The same borne openly at the close of the trial. Observe—(1) *Love and hatred, on the part of God, and His estimate of individuals, not known from His dealings with men in this world* (Eccles ix. 1). (2) *Apprehended wrath on the part of God, the believer's greatest trial.*

5. *His appearing to employ His creatures for his destruction* (verse 12). "His troops (His creatures whom He employs as a general does his troops) come together (as if summoned from different quarters to the siege), and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle." The Sabeans and Chaldeans, lightning and whirlwind, hostile friends and neighbours, good and bad angels, all viewed as God's armies, employed by Him for his destruction. All nature, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, visible and invisible, capable of being employed as His forces, either for mercy or judgment. The Roman troops besieging Jerusalem spoken of as God's armies (Matt. xxii. 7). So the swarms of locusts devastating Judæa (Joel ii. 25). Creation but "a reservoir of means" made ready for the Creator's use. Man being in rebellion against God,

> "The very elements, though each be meant
> The minister of man to serve his wants,
> Conspire against him."

Holy angels especially God's troops (Ps. ciii. 21). These pitch their tent around God's servants for their protection (Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 10, 11). Appeared now to do so around Job's tabernacle for his destruction. "Blind unbelief is sure to err," &c. Job's affliction now apparently chronic. The ministers of destruction had not only raised up their way, as troops advancing to the siege, but had sat down around the beleaguered fortress.

6. *His alienating from him his friends, domestics, and others* (verses 13—15). "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed (ceased from their kind offices as such), and my familiar friends have forgotten me They that dwell in my house (servants and dependents, or strangers partaking, according to Arab custom, of his hospitality and protection, ch. xxxi. 17, 18), and my maids (from whose sex more tenderness and respect might have been expected) count me for a stranger. I am an alien in their sight,"—instead of being regarded as the master in my own dwelling. A painful aggravation of adversity and affliction when relations are more kin than kind. Job enlarges on this distressing change in his domestic and social relations (verse 16). "I called my servant and he gave me no answer (thus treating me not only with disrespect but contempt): I entreated him (instead of commanding him, as a master) with my mouth" (with my own mouth instead of another's, or with a loud call instead of a mere whisper; or rather, instead of summoning him with my hands,—servants in the East being summoned, not by the voice, but by clapping the hands). A still greater trial, however, than this humiliation in his own house, was his (verse 17). "My breath (or my spirit) is strange (odious and disgusting) to my wife (causing her to withdraw from all nearness to me and intercourse with me), though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body" (or, 'and I stink in the nostrils of the children of my womb; *i.e.* of the womb that bare me, viz. my own brothers and sisters; or the children of my own body—either grandchildren, or the children of concubines; or, 'my prayer is loathsome to the children,' &c.). The contemptuous treatment extended beyond his own house (verse 18). "Yea, young children (possibly those of his slaves or domestics, or according

to *margin*, 'the wicked,' the idle rabble, drawn from curiosity to such a spectacle of misfortune and disease) despise me; I arose (or 'I rise' or 'stand up' to speak, treating them with courtesy and respect, or commanding them away), and they spake against me." Sad contrast with his former treatment (chap. xxix. 8—10, 21—23). One of the greatest indignities in the East to be treated by young persons and inferiors with disrespect. Deference to seniors and superiors a prominent feature in Oriental manners. —Verse 19"All my inward friends (*Heb.*'the men of my secret,' my most intimate and confidential friends) abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me." Job's treatment by his three friends a specimen of this part of his affliction, and probably now alluded to. Their feeling, instead of sympathy, one of abhorrence. Their abhorrence from—(1) His loathsome disease; (2) The appearance of his being treated as a wicked man and a hypocrite, whom Divine justice was only now overtaking and bringing his secret wickedness to light. A duty suggested by the light of Nature to withdraw from such. This treatment one of Job's keenest sufferings. The bitter complaint of David and of David's Antitype, Messiah. (Ps. xli. 9; lv. 13, 14, 20). This treatment, like his other trials, ascribed by the patriarch to God. So with David—"Lover and friend hast thou put far from me" (Ps. lxxxviii. 18; xxxviii. 11; xxxi. 11). "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David" (2 Sam. xvi. 10). Observe—

1. The sinful and undutiful conduct of men to be ascribed to God only as secretly permitted, and for wise and holy ends providentially appointed, but neither as commanded nor instigated by Him. So Joseph's treatment by his brethren, and the Crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews.

2. The bonds of affection and friendship in God's hands. These He has but to loose and friends turn foes. The social as well as physical system under His control, and dependent on His will.

3. Satan a willing and powerful agent in producing evil as soon as he obtains permission. His part that of the tale-bearer, to "separate chief friends," and "sow discord among brethren." His name Diabolus, or Devil, "the slanderer," indicative of his character and employment.

4. Evil latent in every heart, and only requiring the removal of restraints in order to its breaking forth. These restraints in God's hand, who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, while the "remainder" of that wrath He restrains (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

5. Civil and domestic concord, and the dutiful conduct of subjects and inferiors, due to God's overruling Providence. The sins of rulers and heads of families often punished by the removal of Providential restraints, and the abandonment of the heart of subjects and children to its own corruption. Hence insubordination, alienation, disobedience, discord. On the other hand, "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7).

6. Job, in these verses, a manifest type of God's Righteous Servant, the Messiah, in His last sufferings. (Read Matthew xxvi. and xxvii.)

IV. Touching appeal to his friends (verses 20—22).

1. *Describes his reduced condition* (verse 20). "My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh (or 'as to my flesh,'—his flesh gone, and his bones adhering to and appearing through his skin); and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth" (with only the skin about the teeth and gums left free from ulcers,—proverbial expression denoting extreme emaciation and peril of life). Satan goes the utmost length of his permission (ch. ii. 6). Job's emaciation already alluded to (ch. xvi. 8). The result partly of his disease, partly of his continued grief. Man's beauty soon made to consume away under God's rebukes (Ps. xxxix. 11).

2. *Entreats the pity of his friends* (verse 21). "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." Job's spirit calmer and more humble. The heart a flinty rock that could resist his appeal. Yet resisted by his friends. Left to himself man has "no flesh in his obdurate heart." Pity no less his duty, and the want of it his sin (ch. vi. 14). Job's appeals for pity on the ground—(1) Of *their relation to him as his "friends."* Natural for a man in trouble to cast himself on the sympathy of his friends. Even an enemy will pity in deep distress. A brother born for adversity. Men bearing the name and profession of friends to be careful to act as such (Prov. xviii. 24). Jesus the "Friend of sinners" (Matt. xi. 19); a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Prov. xviii. 24). Appropriated by believers as *their* Friend (Cant. v. 16). Touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. iv. 15). Precious privilege to possess a true and tried friend. Such to be grappled to our soul "with hooks of steel."

"Poor is the friendless master of a world;
A world in purchase for a friend is gain."

(2) On the ground of *his great affliction.* "The hand of God hath touched me." When God smites, man should pity, not reproach. The heavier the blow, the more tender the

sympathy. Observe—*All Job's afflictions but the touch of God's hand.* That touch all that Satan craved. Able in a moment to turn our joy into sorrow, our comeliness into corruption. Can in a few days strip us of our property, bereave us of our children, alienate our friends, deprive us of our health, and render us an object of loathing to all who see us. "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. *Deprecates their severity* (verse 22). "Why do ye persecute me as God (adding your groundless severity to His), and are not satisfied with my flesh" (which you see mangled and consumed, but will add your reproaches and thus lacerate my spirit as well). Appeals to conscience and humanity as well as to friendship and pity. God's apparent severity towards any of His creatures no reason for man's severity to his suffering fellow-creature. In all circumstances God makes humanity man's duty. "To love mercy" one of the three grand requirements on the part of man (Micah vi. 8). Mercy "twice blessed." Neither man's sins nor God's strokes intended to turn the "milk of human kindness" into gall. The more God wounds in His Providence, the more man's duty to heal with his pity, his prayers, and if need be, his purse. Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan to be the Christian's practice as it was His own.

V. An impassioned wish (verses 23, 24). "O that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book (or public register)! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" Observe—

1. Reference made to the various modes of writing then practiced—(1) On linen or papyrus; (2) On leaden tablets; (3) On rocks or stone pillars, the characters formed with an iron graver and filled up with lead for greater preservation and distinctness. Papyrus rolls still exist from the remotest age of the Pharaohs. Such mode of writing common in the age of Cheops, the founder of the Great Pyramid, 2000 years before Christ. Montfaucon, in 1699, purchased a book in Rome entirely of lead. Wady Mokatteb, along the route of the Israelites in the Desert, full of inscriptions cut in the rocks. At Hisn Ghorab, on the shores of South Arabia, on a high rock terrace, is a large inscription of ten lines in Himyaritic characters, the letters four inches long by one-third of an inch broad, and one-tenth deep, cut in notches, and having apparently been "graven with an iron pen." The inscription is made on a very light grey or lead-coloured stone, a vein of the quarry coming out on the face of the cliff. It is as follows: "We believed in the miracle-mystery, and in the resurrection-mystery, and in the nostril-mystery." The name of *Aws* at the foot of the inscription indicates it to be a relic of the long-lost tribe of Ad, the son of Aws or Uz, the son of Aram and grandson of Shem, and connects it closely with the country in which Job lived.—(*Sermons in Stones*).

2. Reference to writing as already well known. Practised long anterior to the time of Moses. Originally in hieroglyphics; then in letters formed from these. Three kinds of writing practised among the ancient Egyptians—the hieroglyphic, the hieratic (used by the priests), and the demotic, used by the people. Printing originally by carving in stone. Printing by blocks long practised in China. Printing by types only invented in 1440 A.D.; the art begun at Haarlem, in Holland, and perfected at Mainz, in Germany. The first printed book, with a date, a Psalter printed by John Faust in 1457. The first printed Bible with a date, produced by the same person, in 1460.

3. Job's spirit elevated to a high pitch of sublimity and faith. Looks into the future with calmness and triumph. His language that of conscious integrity, and of certainty as to his ultimate vindication. Desires the perpetuation of his words to all generations. His words either those in which he had already declared his innocence, or those in which he was about to declare the certainty of his faith in his Divine Redeemer and Vindicator. Wished to tell out his confidence and confession of Him, without the fear of having a single word to efface.

4. Job's wish fulfilled to an extent undreamt of at the time. His words written in the imperishable records of Holy Scripture. Printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society fifty millions of times in more than a hundred languages, and spread over all the earth, during the last seventy years. The last language in which they have been printed, viz., in this present year 1875, by the Pilgrim-Mission Printing Press at St. Chrischona, near Bâle, is the Amharic, the modern Ethiopic or Abyssinian, nearly related to the language which Job spoke. The Himyaritic, already mentioned, is closely allied to the Ethiopic and Hebrew; and the Amharic has chiefly helped to interpret it. May contain the remains of the language of the earlier races of Arabia, as the Adites and Amalekites, and is considered a form of Arabic which preceded the Ishmaelitic, the Kufic, and of course the ordinary Arabic of the Koran. Hmyar, from whom it has its name, was a grandson of Kahtan or Joktan, the brother of Peleg; and from him were all the princes descended who reigned in Yemen or Arabia

Felix, till the time of Mahomed. His father Yarab is said to have been the inventor of the Arabic language and the progenitor of all the Arabs of Yemen. Abyssinia, whose language is the Amharic, is called by the natives Habesh, or 'mixture,' from the united descendants of Shem and Ham who peopled it, Ham having probably fled at once from his father's presence across the Desert into Egypt, his posterity multiplying in the valley of the Nile and in Abyssinia.

All our words graven as in a rock for ever as a testimony either for us or against us. By our words, as well as by our deeds, we shall be justified or condemned at the final assize (Matt. xii. 36, 37; Jude 15).

VI. Job's triumphant testimony and joyful assurance (verses 25—27). "For I know (*Heb.* 'And,'—'even, or also, I know,') that my Redeemer liveth (or, 'is living,' or 'is the living One'), and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth (or, that He at last,—hereafter, or as the last One,—shall arise upon the dust or earth,—or 'shalt stand over the dust,' viz., my dust, or the dust of the grave, or mankind); and though after my skin worms destroy this body (or, 'and after my skin shall be mangled thus; or, 'even this,' pointing to it), yet in my flesh (*Heb.* 'out of my flesh,' *i.e.*, as my habitation or point of vision,—or, 'without my flesh,' *i.e.*, in a disembodied state) shall I see God; whom I (emphatic, 'Even I myself' shall see for myself—to my advantage, on my side, or as my own), and mine eyes shall behold and not another (or, 'not estranged' as he now appears to be); though my reins be consumed within me" (*Heb.* "my reins,—without '*though*'—are consumed in my bosom," viz., either from disease, or, as *margin*, with desire for that day). One of the most remarkable and magnificent passages in the Bible. Observe—(1) the solemnity with which in the previous verses it has been introduced; (2) The place which it holds in the Book as the climax in Job's speeches. Job's faith here rises to its loftiest triumph. The words uttered when, to outward sense, all was cheerless despair. A glorious example of Christian faith. Job's faith "the substance of (or what gives reality to) things hoped for, the evidence (or certain conviction) of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). Believes what it sees not. Hopes even against hope, or contrary to all appearances against it. His faith and hope the cordial in his trouble. All calumny and suffering easily borne in the certain possession of a personal Redeemer and the assured hope of a blessed deliverance. The passage early incorporated in the Church's burial service, as the expression of her faith and hope of a glorious resurrection. The opening words—

"I know that my Redeemer liveth,"

Among the most memorable sayings of Scripture. Worthy to be written in gems and gold. Perhaps more familiar to Christians than any other text either in the Old or New Testament. Repeated over the open sepulchre for hundreds of years, proclaiming death a conquered foe, and the grave rifled of its spoils. A cheering and joyous light to millions in the dark valley of trouble and of death itself. Job amply compensated for all his suffering in being made thereby the author of these blessed and imperishable words. Consider under the passage—

1. *The assured knowledge which Job asserts:* "I know." The language of *absolute certainty*. The thing no mere guess, or conjecture, or vague hope. No hesitation or doubt about the matter. Known by Job as certainly as that the sun was shining in the heavens. His faith neither to be shaken by his terrible losses, nor his wife's reproaches, nor his friends' suspicions and accusations. Like the life-boat, which buried for a few moments in the surging billows, comes again to the surface. *Christian faith is certain knowledge* (Heb. xi. 1).

Job *glories* in his knowledge. *I* know. The "I" emphatic. *I*, who am so reduced in body and in circumstances, so despised, so wretched, so loathsome. *I*, who am standing on the very brink of the grave. *I* know, whatever you may do, and whatever your unfavourable opinion concerning me. I know it, as my unspeakable comfort and my glorious privilege. *The believer's knowledge of Christ something to glory in.* "I know whom I have believed."

The *grounds and sources* of this assurance. Both internal and external. Internally—(1) Divine enlightenment. All true and saving knowledge of God as our Redeemer the result of Divine teaching (Is. liv. 13). "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this [knowledge of me] unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (Matt. xi. 27; xvi. 17; Gal. i. 15, 16; 1 John iv. 20). (2) Previous personal acquaintance with God, experience of His grace, and habitual walking with Him (Hos. vi. 3).—Externally: (1) The original promise in Eden. That promise one of a

Redeemer who should avenge on the serpent, the devil, the injuries he had inflicted on the human race, to be claimed therefore by Job as his Redeemer. This promise the germ of all redemption acts and offices performed by Jehovah towards mankind. Handed down from father to son and extended through the world. Found in various tribes and nations in a distorted form. Preserved pure in the line of Shem. The Fall through the Serpent represented on the temple of Osiris at Phyle, in Upper Egypt. The resurrection exhibited on the tomb of Mycerinus in one of the Pyramids four thousand years ago. (2) Enoch's prophecy, preserved by tradition and quoted by Jude in his epistle (verses 14, 15). (3) Enoch's translation to heaven before the Flood. (4) The preservation of Noah and his family in the Ark. (5) The continually offered sacrifices, which told of a Redeemer who by death should destroy him that had the power of death (Heb. ii. 14). Observe—(1) Job's certainty as to a living Redeemer in that early age more than 2000 years before his appearance on the earth, a solemn witness against all unbelief in our own, nearly 2000 years after it. (2) Job's happiness and comfort in the knowledge of a personal Redeemer *before* he came, rather to be exceeded by our own so long *after* he has done so. (3) The sweetest and surest knowledge of God as in Christ our own gracious Redeemer obtained in the time of trouble and affliction. A' eventide light.

2. *The content of Job's knowledge, or the thing asserted to be known.* Has reference—

(1). To *God.* "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. Regarding God, he knows—

(i.) That He was *his Redeemer.* The name (*Heb.* Goel), applied—(*a*) To the *kinsman*, whose duty under the law, was, as next-of-kin, to redeem a captive or enslaved relative; to buy back his sold or forfeited inheritance; to marry his childless widow if unmarried himself; and to avenge his innocent blood. The institution recognised and established in the Mosaic law, but doubtless in existence long before. Still existing more or less in the East. Like others under the law, typical of the Messiah and His redemption-work. The name applied—(*b*) To God as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people, especially of Israel from Egyptian bondage and Babylonian captivity. Peculiarly applied—(*c*) To God the Son, who, as the promised Deliverer of the human race, should become incarnate as the woman's seed, and through His own death bruise the Serpent's head. The name not expressly applied to Him in the New Testament, but the thing everywhere. (See Rom. iii. 24; Eph. i. 7; Gal. iii. 13; iv. 5; Titus ii. 14; Heb. ix. 12; Rev. v. 9). The name proper to a kinsman. Under the law, only such had the right to redeem. Pointed to the fact that He who was to be man's Redeemer was to be also his Brother. The human kinsmanship of the Divine Redeemer, a subject of express prophecy: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the *man that is my fellow*" (Zech. xiii. 7). Such kinmanship ascribed to Him by the Apostle as necessary for His undertaking. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself also took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them," &c. (Heb. ii. 14). God the Son the Author of all redeeming acts towards Israel. (Ps. lxviii. 17, 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8—10).

God the Son regarded by Job more or less distinctly as his Redeemer, in—(*a*) Delivering him from troubles (so Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 16); (*b*) Vindicating his character and avenging his wrongs; (*c*) Delivering him from death and the grave; (*d*) Delivering him from the hand of the great adversary, the devil. His words uttered under a deep sense of his wants and necessities. His spirit at the time more than ordinarily elevated and illuminated. His language, perhaps, primarily referring to the divine vindication of his character, but extending much beyond it. Appears to triumph over death and the grave, of which he had the nearest prospect. The language only understood in its fullest sense in New Testament times. Words uttered by the prophets with a meaning not fully apprehended at the time by themselves (1 Pet. i. 10—12). Redemption the term most generally employed in the New Testament to designate the Saviour's work. Viewed as redemption from the curse or condemning sentence of the Divine law (Gal. iii. 13); the power of Satan, who had acquired a right over us through that sentence (Heb. ii. 14); death and hell, as the punishment awarded by the Divine law to transgression (Cor. xv. 56, 57); and very specially from sin itself (Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; Eph. v. 25—27; Matt. i. 21). Israel's national and external redemption typical of that of mankind as sinners, by Jesus Christ. The great redemption by the Son of God effected—(1) By purchase; (2) By power. The price of human redemption the blood of Christ, His substituted suffering and death. The power employed in it that of the Holy Ghost, sent in virtue of the price paid upon the Cross. His power required—(1) In quickening the soul to a new spiritual life; (2) Preserving and perfecting it in the image of God.

Job declares his *personal interest* in the Redeemer: "*My* Redeemer." The language—(1) Of appropriation; (2) Of faith; (3)

Of choice; (4) Of love; (5) Of knowledge and past experience; (6) Of satisfaction. Something to say *the* Redeemer; more to say *our* Redeemer; most and best to say *my* Redeemer. Devils able to say the first; unsaved men the second; only saved believers the last. '*My*' the word that links the lost sinner to the dying Saviour. I may well rejoice that Christ is *a* Redeemer; immensely more that He is *my* Redeemer. This little word, like the honey on the point of Jonathan's staff, enlightens the eyes and puts strength into the soul. Inexpressibly more sweetness and satisfaction in two such words as "My God," &c., than in all the pleasures of the world since its creation [*John Brown of Haddington*]. His last words were: "My Christ." *My* does not engross the Redeemer, but claims its share in Him with others. Faith's first act is to believe Christ to be *a* Redeemer; the second to take Him as *my* Redeemer The privilege as well as duty of each human soul thus to appropriate Christ as his Redeemer. The world's as well as Israel's sin and condemnation *not* to do so. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John i. 11, 12).

(ii.). Job asserts that this, his Redeemer, was *living*, or "the living One." "My Redeemer *liveth*." The Redeemer thus viewed as—(*a*) *Personally living.* (*b*) *Continuing to exist beyond the bounds of time.* Able, therefore, to redeem him from death and the grave. Lived to vindicate His character after his body had mingled with the dust. Able to save to the uttermost, or to the end. (*c*) *The Mighty One.* Life the expression of strength and power. "Mine enemies are *lively*, and they are *strong*." Job's Redeemer and our's possessed of all power in heaven and earth. "Has power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him" (John xvii. 2). (*d*) *The Author and Giver of life.* Having life in Himself and able to communicate it to others. The living and life-giving Redeemer set over against Job's state as dying, or virtually dead. The epithet one proper to God. Called "the living God;" He that "liveth for ever and ever." Appropriated by Christ: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and am alive for evermore." Christ the Resurrection and the Life. The Way, the Truth, and Life. The true God and eternal life (Rev. i. 18; John ii. 25; xiv. 16; 1 John v. 20). A living and life-giving Redeemer our comfort in a dying body in a dying world, and with the remains of death in our soul. Christ, as our Redeemer, lives—(*a*) To plead our cause in heaven (Heb. vii. 25); (*b*) To send down supplies of needed grace (2 Cor. xii. 9); (*c*) To prepare a place for us in Paradise (John xiv. 2); (*d*) To attend to all our concerns (Heb. iv. 14—16); (*e*) To overcome all our enemies; (*f*) To deliver us out of all our troubles; (*g*) To give victory over temptation and sin; (*h*) To make us partakers of his life; (*i*) To receive us to Himself; (*j*) To come again in glory. Christ as an ever-living Redeemer, the hope and trust of the believer. That our Redeemer lives, an antidote against the fear of man, of troubles, of death, of judgment (Isa. li. 12, 13; xliii. 2, 3; Rev. i. 17, 18). Our case safe in the hands of a living Redeemer. Enough for a dying saint that his Redeemer lives. One at least whom death cannot remove from us. His life a pledge of His people's (John xiv. 19).

(iii.) *That He should "stand (or rise up) at the last day (or 'as the last one') upon (or over) the earth."* Job elevated by the Holy Spirit to the place and office of a prophet. The book a part of those Scriptures which "testify" of Christ, and out of which Christ expounded to the disciples the things concerning Himself. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. i. 11). The testimony of Moses and the prophets that Christ should suffer, and should be the first that should rise from the dead (Acts xxvi. 22, 23). Job's present language a prophecy, as well as the expression of his faith and assurance. Declares—(1) That God as his Redeemer *would one day appear on behalf of his suffering servant.* "Standing" or "rising up" the Scripture expression for a Divine appearance as the deliverer and avenger of His people (Ps. vii. 6; x. 12; xii. 5; Isa. xxxiii. 10). (2) That he *would appear on or over the earth.* Appears to be a double prophecy, viz., of the Redeemer's incarnation and His coming to judgment. These often united in the prophets, being, as here, viewed together as one event. The first necessary to the second, the second the compliment of the first. His coming to suffer necessary in order to His coming to reign His second coming completes what His first began. Christ called by the apostle, speaking of the resurrection of the dead, the last Adam, or second Man, as apparently here, the last or latter One (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 45, 47). The first Adam brought man's body to the dust; and second comes to raise it from it. Observe—(1) Faith comforts by turning the sufferer's eye from God's *present* dealings with him to his *future* ones. (2) The consolation of the Church is—(i.) That Christ has suffered for our sins, the Just One in the room of the unjust; (ii.) That he has risen as the first-fruits of them that

slept; (iii.) That to them that look for Him He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation; (iv.) That them that sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him (1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 14).—The knowledge asserted by Job has reference also—

(2) To *himself* (verse 27). "And though after my skin, &c., yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself," &c. The centre of his faith and hope, not only that his Redeemer lives, and should one day appear, but that as the result of it he should

See God.

Two ways of seeing God—(i.) Mentally and spiritually; (ii.) Physically and corporeally. God seen—(i.) In His character and works; (ii.) In His person. The former only our privilege here, while in the body; the latter, hereafter, out of the body and after the resurrection. God seen in His Person in His Son Jesus Christ. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In Christ is seen "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Isaiah, in vision, beheld the Lord (Jehovah) sitting on His throne in the temple (Is. vi. 1). He beheld the "glory" of Christ (John xii. 41). As distinct from the glorified Redeemer, at the right hand of the Father, Stephen beheld "the glory of God" (Acts vii. 55). In heaven the angels always behold "the face" of the Father (Matt. xviii. 10). The vision of God, anticipated by Job, generally understood to be a corporeal one in His restored body. Appears to emphasize it in this view—"Whom mine eyes shall behold." Christ, at His second appearing, the object of bodily vision. "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him."

The prospect re-asserted and dwelt upon from its sweetness and certainty. I shall see God—see Him for myself—mine eyes shall behold Him. Contrasted with his present experience,—unable to perceive God. God hiding Himself from him, his greatest trial (ch. xiii. 24; ix. 11; xxiii. 8, 9). Observe—(i.) The vision of God the blessedness of the glorified (Ps. xvii. 15; Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 4). Implies—(1) A much higher and clearer knowledge of God (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12). (2) Enjoyment of immediate and uninterrupted fellowship with Him. (3) More blissful consciousness of His favour and love. (4) Fuller understanding of His providential dealings here. —(ii.) The nature of faith to believe that though God now hides His face, yet we shall again behold it (Micah vii. 8; Hab. iii. 17—19). Faith trusts in the dark and hopes for what it sees not.—(iii.) Joyful anticipation of seeing God the peculiar privilege of a believer. Implies—(1) A conscious state of peace and reconciliation with God. (2) A renewed nature, capable of delighting in God and in His fellowship. (3) Purity of heart, and conscious integrity of character. Only the pure in heart capable of seeing God (Matt. v. 8). Evil cannot dwell with Him. A hypocrite shall not come before Him. To see God's face, coupled with serving Him, the blessedness of the glorified (Rev. xxii. 4). The sight of God and the Lamb at His second appearing, the world's greatest dread (Rev. vi. 15—17). The comfort of believers that when God shall appear, it will be "for them," as their Friend and Redeemer, for their full and everlasting salvation (Heb. ix. 28).

The appearing of his Redeemer, and the future sight of God as his friend, the object of Job's intense longing. "My reins are consumed in my bosom"—with desire for that day (*margin*). Contrasted with the object of desire held forth by his three friends—health and prosperity in this life. The salvation of God, perfected at the Saviour's second appearing, the Church's desire both in the Old and New Testament. Jacob's experience: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." David's: "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (wilt not leave me in the grave). "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Isaiah, and the Church in his day: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night;" the answer: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Is. xxvi 9, 19). The last words of the spouse in the Song: "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices." Christ's glorious appearing the blessed hope and desire of the early Christians, exposed as they were to death and all kinds of suffering for the truth's sake. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come—the Spirit *in* the Bride" (Rev. xxii. 17; Rom. viii. 23). In reply to the promise: "Behold, I come quickly;" the Church's last recorded prayer is: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The cry of the souls under the altar: "How long, O Lord, wilt thou not avenge our blood on the earth."

The Lord's second appearing, and the resurrection consequent on it, to be desired and longed for, as—(1) The time of full redemption and salvation in body and soul to believers themselves; (2) The same to their brethren in Christ, whether living or long departed; (3) The time of deliverance to the whole creation from the bondage of corruption entailed upon them by man's sin;

(4) The time when Christ shall be manifested in glory, and the kingdom of God shall fully come; (5) The period for the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (Rom. viii. 19—23; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; 2 Thess. i. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13).

"He whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in his chariot paved with love;
And what his storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.
Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy!"

VII. Addresses remonstrance and warning to his friends (verse 28, 29).

1. The *Remonstrance* (verse 28). "But ye should say (or, 'because ye say') why persecute we him? (or, 'how shall we persecute him,') seeing the root of the matter is found in me," (*margin* "and what root of matter is found in me?"—or, "and how shall we find a ground of accusation" [*Heb.* 'the root of a word or thing'] against him?) The great offence of Job's friends their persecution of a suffering brother Their desire and aim to prove him a wicked man and deserving the calamities sent upon him. Sought therefore to find ground of accusation against him. Hence Job's name "the persecuted one." In this, as in other things, a type of Christ. Job's friends the representatives of the Scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders of the Jews (Matt. xii. 14; Luke xi. 54; John viii. 6).

Persecution

Bequeathed to all Christ's members (John xv. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 12). Its endurance by the Church a characteristic of the reign of Antichrist (Rev. xi. 2—5; xii. 11—17). Satan the great persecutor. Persecution in accordance with the original promise of a Saviour (Gen. iii. 15). May be either bloody or unbloody—from the openly profane or the professedly godly. Petty persecution in the family or the workshop often as trying as that of the dungeon and the scaffold. Almost one continued persecution of the Church from Jews and Pagans during the first three hundred years of its existence. The Church nursed in blood. That blood made the means of its increase. Like Israel in Egypt (Ex. i. 12). Ten great persecutions enumerated before the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. Persecution frequently that of one part of the professing Church by another. The dominant section often a persecutor of the rest. The spirit and ground of persecution—(1) Enmity to the truth; (2) Desire for supremacy; (3) Intolerance of opposition; (4) Blind and misguided zeal (Gal. iv. 29; 3 John ix. 10; John xvi. 2, 3). Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, the mystical seven-hilled city, drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev. xvii. 6). Note in Rhemish Testament on this passage (Rev. xvii. 6),—"Their blood," viz., that of heretics, "is not called the blood of saints, no more than the blood of thieves, mankillers, and other malefactors; for the shedding of which by order of justice, no commonwealth shall answer." More blood shed in Christian persecutions than in Pagan ones. A long blood-stained history of Inquisitions, Crusades, Massacres, and Star-chambers. Between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, about a million of non-conforming Albigenses and Waldenses put to death by armies sent for that purpose with the Pope's blessing and the promise of eternal salvation. Nearly a million more suffered death on the same grounds, within fifty years after the institution of the order of the Jesuits in 1540. In the Netherlands, the Duke of Alva boasted that thirty-six thousand heretics had been put to death by the common executioner. Within thirty days from the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's day (1572), thirty thousand at least calculated to have been butchered in Paris and throughout France. Public thanks ordered by the Pope to be given in one of the churches at Rome, and a medal to be struck for its commemoration.

2. *The threatening* (verse 29). "Be ye afraid of the sword; for wrath (such as you manifest against me) bringeth the punishments of the sword (or, 'is one of the iniquities [deserving and meeting with the punishment] of the sword'), that ye may know that there is a judgment." The sword the symbol of justice, here the justice of God (Rom. xiii. 4; Deut. xxxii 41). An invisible avenger takes the part of the persecuted and oppressed. Persecutors especially threatened in the New Testament Christ's second appearing especially terrible to such as smite their fellow servants (Matt. xxiv. 49). A righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble His people (2 Thess. i. 6—10). The judgments of the last days especially inflicted on the persecutors of the saints (Rev. xviii. 6, 24). Observe:—(1) *Persecution a hard and terrible enterprise.* Pagan persecutors noted as having generally died by horrible deaths. Charles IX., who authorized the Parisian massacre of 1572, died in despair in a bloody

sweat. Christ's words to Saul addressed to all persecutors: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (2) *The part of charity and piety to seek to turn persecutors from their sin, and so avert their doom.* (3) *Anger against the servants of God, though shewn only in words, viewed by God as a sin equivalent to murder.* The sin of Job's friends. Hence to be atoned for by sacrifice at the close of the controversy. (4) *Men not secured from Divine judgment by a religious profession.* (5) *The treatment given to Christ's servants and brethren one great criterion by which men will hereafter be judged* (Matt. xxv. 34—46). (6) *The comfort of God's people that they can appeal from man's judgment to God's.* (7) *A day coming when men's character and doings will be clearly revealed* (Mal. iii. 18). Men to be "brought out in their blacks and whites" [*S. Rutherford*]. (8) *A day of judgment terribly certain.* (i.) From the *testimony of Scripture.* The first recorded inspired declaration such a testimony (Jude xiv. 15). Enoch's prophecy doubtless known to Job. Such testimony greatly accumulated since then (Eccles. ii. 9; xii. 14; Matt. xii. 36; Acts ii. 30, 31; Rom. ii. 16; xiv. 10, 12; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10. (ii.) From the *universal voice of conscience.* (iii.) From *God's providential dealings in the world.* Sin punished here so far as to shew that God marks and punishes it; left unpunished, so far as to shew that "there is a judgment" to come.

CHAPTER XX.

ZOPHAR'S SECOND SPEECH.

Produces nothing new; much more outspoken than before. Enlarges on the miseries overtaking the wicked, insinuating that Job was such. His argument,—like in condition, like in character.

I. The introduction to the speech.

His reason for speaking again, viz., Job's charges of cruelty and unkindness, and his denunciation of Divine wrath against them on account of it (verse 2). "Therefore (because of thy charges and denunciations), do my thoughts (cogitations as to what I ought to do) cause me to answer, and for this I make haste (*margin*, 'my haste' [or earnestness] is in me). I have heard the check of my reproach (reproof that is a reproach to me), and the spirit of my understanding (my spirit which has intelligence regarding the subject in question) causeth me to answer." Observe—

1. *The part of a wise man not to speak without sufficient reason.* Zophar had a reason for speaking, but not a correct one. Job's charges and denunciations were true and just.

2. *Pride ill brooks reproof.* Men seldom willing to take the reproach which they give to others. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

3. *Right to think well before uttering one's sentiments on more serious subjects.* Better that our *thoughts* cause us to answer than our feelings.

4. *Insensibility no part of piety.* Zophar *felt* as well as thought. Spoke from *ardour* as well as reflection. Good to be zealously affected in a good thing. What is not spoken earnestly may as well remain unspoken.

5. *Earnestness to be grounded on just considerations.* Thought to lead, feeling to follow. "While I was musing the fire burned." Zophar's feeling called "haste." Often too much haste both in our feeling and our words. With less haste in Zophar's spirit, there had been more humanity in his speech. "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth." Not less he that hasteth with his tongue. "Be not rash with thy mouth." "Slow to speak, swift to hear." What is spoken in haste, frequently not according to truth. Hasty words make matter for repentance. Hastily spoken not always hastily forgotten. Hasty words often make deep wounds. The hasty to speak the slowest to learn (Prov. xxix. 20).

6. *A spirit of intelligence to be prized and cultivated.* Natural understanding the gift of God, but may either be fed or famished. The best way to a good understanding is a good life. "An honest man has half as much more brains as he needs." "A good understanding have all they that keep His commandments." Christ made "wisdom" to those who are in Him, as well as righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor. i. 30). Wisdom given to believing prayer (James i. 5, 6). To have a good understanding one needs to keep both eyes and ears open. A spirit of intelligence necessary to a good answer. A light needful for entering a dark chamber. Safe not to speak on a subject till you are conscious of understanding it.

II. The speech itself.

The gist of it—Job must be a wicked man. The reasoning—Wicked men are miserable, either now or afterwards; Job is very miserable; therefore Job is a wicked man. The question: Are *only* wicked men miserable in this life? Job maintains that the wicked are not always nor alone miserable; that

"time and chance come alike to all." Zophar's second speech another example of lofty Oriental poetry. Contains solemn and weighty truths, quoted and verified to this day. His opening statement such (verse 5). "The triumphing (or song) of the wicked is short (*Heb.*, from near; like water taken from the surface instead of a deep well, therefore ending quickly and abruptly); the joy of the hypocrite (or profane) is but for a moment." The allusion to Job's case too obvious. The statement true, but not always in the sense of Zophar. The joy of the wicked short-lived. May last through life, but not beyond it. The pleasure of sin but for a season. The joy of the ungodly short, as—(1) It has no solid foundation—built only on earthly things that perish with the using; (2) Is based upon a falsehood, viz., that sin and the creature are able to give happiness; (3) Can only exist in the present life. Creature-enjoyment no longer-lived than the creature itself. Sin in its own nature opposed to lasting enjoyment. Divine justice engaged to terminate it in this life. Sin a tree with branches enough, but no root; with plenty of blossom, but no fruit. Observe—1. *The longest life but "for a moment."* (1) In comparison with eternity; (2) In the view of the individual himself towards its close. Sad, for the pleasure of a moment to throw away the joys of an endless life.—2. *The joy of the hypocrite or profane "but for a moment."*—(1) As confined to this life; (2) In comparison with the joy of the righteous, which is lasting. The joy of a false religion, or of a mere external profession and shallow experience of the true, a lamp that goes out from want of oil.—Zophar refers to all past history for confirmation (verse 4). "Knowest thou not this of old," &c. The history of the past most useful when serving as a guide to the present. History full of examples of the

Short-lived prosperity of sin.

The memory of the Flood and its terrible lessons still fresh in the days of Zophar. The truth solemn and salutary, but Zophar's application of it cruel and unjust. His statements, too, require a wider field of vision than the present world.

1. *The prosperous ungodly sooner or later overthrown with contempt and infamy* (verse 6). "Though his excellency (loftiness or exaltation) mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds (though he attain the highest pitch of earthly prosperity and grandeur), yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung (cast away with contempt and abhorrence; or, according to some, 'in the midst of his splendour'); they that have seen him (beholding with admiration his prosperity) shall say, 'Where is he?' Obvious allusion to Job's former dignity and prosperity. Prosperous wickedness is—(1) One of the mysteries of Providence; (2) One of the trials of good men; (3) One of the proofs of a future judgment. The perplexity of Asaph till he "went into the sanctuary of God," and understood the end (Ps. lxxiii. 17). No man to be called happy till the end of his life, a maxim of the ancient heathen. Revelation adds, Nor till *after* the end of it. Christ lifts the curtain and shows what is beyond. Humbling contrast with former haughtiness and magnificence implied in Zophar's simile (so Ps. lxxxiii. 10). Contempt and infamy attach to wickedness, however prosperous. A day coming when God's despisers shall be an abhorring to all flesh (Is. lxvi. 24).

2. *The prosperous ungodly vanish from sight and memory* (verse 8). "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. The eye also which saw him (looked on him with admiration) shall see him no more, &c." The life of the ungodly especially a dream, as—(1) Without solidity and reality; (2) As quickly terminating; (3) As soon forgotten. No trace left that men care to cherish. No pleasing and profitable "footprints on the sands of time.' Good men only the truly "great" who "remind us we can make our lives sublime." "The memory of the wicked shall rot," Associated with nothing excellent, noble, or benevolent. The presence of bad great men on earth a nightmare, which men would fain "chase away" and then forget. Seen especially in the case of tyrants, ambitious and unprincipled rulers, men climbing to power by forbidden ways and employing it for evil ends.

3. *Their children affected by their sin* (verse 10). "His children shall seek to please the poor (to propitiate the poor, whom their father oppressed or defrauded; or, shall be so reduced as to court the favour even of the poor; *margin*, 'the poor shall oppress his children'; *Coverdale*—'his children shall go a-begging'); and his hand (or, "their hands") shall restore their goods" (the goods of which their father had plundered them). Observe—(1) *An inheritance of trouble bequeathed by the ungodly to their offspring.* In the Providence of God, the effects of a man's oppression made to extend to his children. The child often reaps what the father sows, good or bad. (2) *Ill-gotten wealth, sooner or later, proves ill-gotten woe.* Restitution of unjust gains follows either in a man's own life-time or his children's. Made voluntarily, the curse is

averted both from himself and them. Zaccheus the publican (Luke xix. 1, &c). The reference here to the rich man's children cruel towards Job, still mourning the loss of his seven sons and three daughters.

4. *Effects of their sin entailed on their own person* (verse 11). "His bones are full of the sins of his youth (or of his secret sins, or of youthful vigour), which shall lie down with him in the dust." Apparent allusion to Job's diseased body. Observe—(1) *Bodily disease often the result of by-gone excesses.* Age often made to inherit the sins of youth (ch. xiii. 26). Hence David's prayer (Ps. xxv. 7). Seeds of disease sown in sinful indulgences. The drunkard carries the effects of his cups to the grave. Secret sins often followed by open sufferings. A cruel insinuation on the part of Zophar that this was Job's case. (2) The sinner often smitten with disease and death in the midst of prosperity and apparent strength. Herod at Cesarea (Acts xii. 21—23). (3) *Sad when a man's sins lie down with him in the dust.* Certain, if not prevented by repentance, faith, and forgiveness. To lie down with him in the dust is to continue his companions for ever (Rev. xxii. 11). Separation from our sins either now or never.

5. *Terrible misery after temporary enjoyment* (verse 12—14). "Though wickedness (especially in the acquisition and enjoyment of ill-gotten wealth), be sweet in his mouth; though he hide it under his tongue (either for secrecy or continued enjoyment); though he spare it and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: yet his meat in his bowels is turned; it is the gall of asps (the most deadly poison) within him." Sin sweet to the unrenewed heart. Stolen waters sweet. Such sweetness short-lived. Honey in the mouth becomes gall in the bowels. Sin in itself a deadly poison. Death itself, and death its wages. David's sweet sin with Bathsheba broke his bones. The blood of Urijah brought blood into his house. The effect of sinful enjoyment is to "mourn at the last" (Prov. v. 11—14). Poison no less deadly because sweet to the taste. The sweetest things often the sourest afterwards.

6. *Forced surrender of acquired wealth* (verse 15). "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly." Apparently Job's case. Riches eagerly pursued, abundantly obtained, and fondly enjoyed, to be sooner or later unwillingly surrendered. The worldling and his wealth part company, if not before, yet on a dying bed. The glutton compelled to vomit up his dainty morsels. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The sumptuous table then gladly exchanged for a drop of water. The worldling unable to keep his wealth a moment beyond God's pleasure. A thousand means at His disposal of making him quit his grasp on this side of death. The failure of a bank, the fall of a mercantile house, the explosion of some promising speculation, sufficient for the purpose. "But even now worth this, and now worth nothing!"

7. *Death in some distressing form and circumstances* (verse 16). "He shall suck the poison of asps (the most deadly one); the viper's tongue (put out when about to bite), shall slay him." All animate and inanimate nature only instruments for the execution of God's purposes, whether of judgment or of mercy. The effect of the intoxicating cup, that at last it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder (Prov. xxiii. 32). To suck the pleasures of sin now is to suck the poison of asps hereafter. The Bible draws aside the veil and reveals man's tempter become his tormenter (Luke xvi. 19—26).

8. *Bitter disappointment and exclusion from future happiness* (verse 17). "He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter." A blessedness even in this life, of which the worldling deprives himself. Still more in the life to come. The river of life, the wine of the kingdom, the fruits of paradise, the joys at God's right hand, the pleasures for evermore, all forfeited for the momentary pleasures of sin. To the cry at the closed gates: "Lord, Lord, open unto us," the only response: "Depart from me, I never know you."

9. *No real enjoyment of his riches even here* (verse 18). "That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down (or enjoy it); according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein." Riches gathered often become riches scattered. To obtain wealth one thing, to enjoy it another. Great gains not always great gain. Man *gets*, God *gives*. Ill-gotten, ill-gone, [*Latin Proverb*]. Wealth often the parent of woe. A canker in a sinner's gold (James v. 3). Wages earned without God only put into a bag with holes. The world a lie, especially to those who trust in it. Money outside the heart a blessing, inside of it a curse.

10. *A troubled conscience* (verses 19, 20). "Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not (obtaining it by fraud instead of honest industry); surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly (his mind or conscience), he shall not save of that which he desired" (or, shall not escape with his coveted but ill-

gotten wealth). Another cruel and unjust allusion to Job. The charge of oppression afterwards directly made by Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 5—9). Taken generally, the statement true. Ill-gained wealth, like the hoarded manna, breeds worms; the worm of an accusing conscience. The rust of dishonest gain eats into the flesh like fire (James v. 3). A house built by oppression gives a voice to its stones and timber (Hab. ii. 9—11). A quiet conscience better than a well-filled coffer. Naboth's coveted vineyard a curse both to Ahab and his wife (1 Kings xxi. 1—19).

11. *Loss of property and of children* (verse 21). There shall none of his meat be left (*margin*, "there shall none be left for his meat"); therefore shall no man look for his goods." A cutting sentence for impoverished and bereaved Job. Job's full house now an empty one. His goods gone, and none to inherit the miserable remnant. The richest man in Uz now penniless. The man with ten adult children now without even one. Able lately to leave an ample inheritance to his children, now without either estate or sons to inherit it. One of the world's vanities the desire to enrich one's heirs. God and man often robbed while living to leave larger sums when dead. A worldly man's great affliction to lose the heir of his hoarded wealth. The rich worldling often compelled to leave his riches to those for whom he cares not, and who care not for him.

12. *Perplexity and trouble in the midst of his riches* (verse 22). "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked (or of the mischievous; every kind of mischief; or every blow that comes upon the wretched) shall come upon him." A sad and cutting remembrancer to Job of his various calamities and the quarter from which some of them had come. God, in His providence, visits the prosperous wicked with sudden and unexpected manifestations of His anger (verse 23) "When he is about to fill his belly (or, 'there shall be wherewith to fill his belly') God shall cast the fury of His wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him (as literally on Sodom and Gomorrha; also implying the vehemence and abundance of the judgments) while he is eating" (in the midst of his enjoyment; or, "as his food"). A bitter sarcasm. The worldling sits down to his sumptuous table, but the wrath of God shall be his dish. Vengeance shall be his viand. He shall be fed with fury for his food. Case of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16—20). Experienced by Israel in the wilderness (Num. xi. 33; Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31. Appeared to have been realised in Job. Overtaken by apparent judgments in the midst of his prosperity. Fire rained on his cattle as on the cities of the Plain (ch. i. 16; Gen. xix. 24). Fiery rain instead of refreshing showers an awful sign of judgment (Ps. l. 3).

13. *Inability to effect escape* (verse 24). "He shall flee from the iron weapon (the weapon employed in close combat,—visible judgments),—and the bow (discharging its arrows from a distance,—invisible judgments) of steel (*Heb.* of brass; therefore with all the more force) shall strike him through." Seeking to escape from one evil he falls into another. Fleeing from the pit he falls into the snare. God at no loss for means to punish the ungodly. Vain attempt to escape when God purposes to destroy. The only place of refuge for a sinner the wounds of Jesus opened to satisfy justice for his sins. Submission to God and faith in His Son the only but certain safety for the guilty.

14. *Rapid and effectual execution of God's purposes of vengeance* (verse 25). "It is drawn (viz., the arrow or the sword with which to punish the ungodly), and cometh out of the body (having passed through it); yea, the glittering sword (of Divine vengeance, Deut. xxxii. 41; Ez. xxi. 9, 10) cometh out of his gall (or gall-bladder, having thus inflicted a deadly wound); terrors are upon him" (the terror of death which now stares him in the face, and the terrors of judgment immediately to follow). The language rapid, elliptical, and in the past and present tense, to indicate the suddenness and certainty of the blow. A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. How shall we escape if we neglect the great salvation? (Verse 16.—"All darkness (all kinds of calamity, or accumulated misery) shall be hid in his secret places," (hid amongst his choicest treasures, or secretly laid up for him in places where he expected safety). Observe—(1) *God's judgments find the sinner in his most secret and secure retreat.* "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." (2) *Among a sinner's most valuable possessions lies a hidden curse.* "A fire not blown (requiring no blowing, or not kindled by man, viz., the 'fire of God' or lightning, as ch. i. 16) shall consume him." Terrible word for poor Job, who had seen his sheep and the shepherds consumed in this very way. A similar judgment on the household of Korah, &c. (Num. xvi. 35). "It shall go ill with him that is left (or, 'it shall consume' what is left) in his tabernacle." Words cruelly telling in the case of Job. The fire of God had left but one shepherd to tell the tale of the disaster. Stroke after stroke had fallen on his property

and household, till all were consumed but his wife and three servants. Job, if any, seemed marked out by Divine judgments as a secret and guilty transgressor. Terrible trial for faith. "Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?" (Ps. lxxvi. 7).

15. *Secret sins discovered* (verse 27). "The heavens shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him." Apparently verified in Job's case. The lightning from *heaven*, and the Chaldean and Sabean marauders, with the whirlwind of the desert, from the *earth*, seemed to proclaim him a wicked man, whom vengeance was at length overtaking (Acts xxviii. 4). Observe—(1) *Animate and inanimate creation made at God's pleasure to conspire against his enemies.* (2) *Iniquity, however secretly committed, sooner or later revealed.* No darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide either themselves or their sins. Secret iniquity not only open to God's view, but one day to be so to that of the universe. Hypocrisy only *now* "the only evil that walks invisible, except to God alone." No cloak of religion able to hide sin from God, or by-and-by, from our neighbour either. Terrible exposure awaiting secret evil-doers. (3) *Our sins either to be found out now by ourselves and brought to the throne of grace to be pardoned, or to be found out hereafter by God, and brought to the throne of judgment to be punished.*

16. *Destruction of all belongings in a day of wrath* (verse 28). "The increase (progeny, or natural products) of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away (be swept away as by a torrent, suddenly and irrecoverably) in the day of his wrath." Sad verification of this apparently afforded in the case of Job. The whole progeny of his house, with all his goods, swept away as by an inundation. A day of wrath now surely overtaking this prince of Uz. Difficult for him and his friends to believe otherwise. To the latter the thing was clear. To Job it *seemed* so; but if actual *wrath*, it was *undeserved.* Job's error in sometimes inclining to the latter alternative. His *apparent* "day of wrath" was, in reality, a day of love. Observe—(1) *The province of faith to believe against all appearances.* "Behind a frowning providence," &c. (2) *Easy with God to sweep away all the increase of a man's house.* (3) *A day of wrath coming, in which all earthly possessions will flow away.* "The earth and the works therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. iii. 10).

III. The summing-up (verse 29).

"This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God" (*Heb.*, the heritage of the decree of the Mighty One; decreed by Him who is Almighty, therefore irresistible). Similar language in Ps. xi. 6. The conclusion apparently unavoidable in relation to Job. The portion of a wicked man manifestly meted out to him. If Job is not such a man, all our notions of the Divine government in this world are upset—the rock is "removed out of his place." Strong faith and a sound conscience required by Job to believe that God would yet clear his character. The statement of Zophar both true and untrue. Viewed in relation to this life, not always true. Viewed in relation to the next, far short of the fact. A more terrible portion awaits the impenitent in another world The harrowing things mentioned by Zophar only a foreshadowing and prelude to the sinner's future doom. Wrath rarely exhibited in this world, because reserved for the next. Days of wrath here sent as specimens and warnings of that which is to come.

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away.
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall ye meet that dreadful day?
Jesus, be Thou my spirit's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away."

Observe—(1) *A sinner's portion not what he wishes, but what God appoints.* (2) His portion a *heritage*—(i.) As contrasted with his earthly possessions and enjoyments; (ii.) As certain to find him as its *heir;* (3) *Solemn contrast between this portion and that of the believer in Jesus* (Ps. xvi. 5, 6; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOB'S REPLY TO ZOPHAR'S SECOND SPEECH.

The ungodly, instead of experiencing the miseries indicated by Zophar, often, perhaps generally, enjoy continued ease and prosperity in this life.

I. Introduction (verse 2—6).

1. *Bespeaks earnest attention* (verse 2). "Hear diligently my speech." Men of wisdom and experience, especially pious sufferers, worthy to be seriously listened to. Solemn and weighty truths to be heard with corresponding attention. *Heb.*, "Hear, hear." Serious matters call for double or diligent hearing. Deep attention to be given to

truths concerning God's mysterious providence, still more to those regarding a provided Saviour and the great salvation (Heb. ii. 1). An aggravated sin when God stretches out His hand and no man regards it (Prov. i. 24).

A reason given for such attention: "And let this be (or, 'and this shall be') your consolations." Allusion to Zophar's boasted consolations (ch. xv. 11). Sometimes mourners more relieved by our listening to *their* sentiments than by uttering our own. Better to be silent in the presence of the afflicted than to dispute or censure. Consolation due to sufferers from their friends. A brother born for adversity. Professed comforters may become real tormentors.

2. *Solicits patience* (verse 3). "Suffer me that I may speak." Patience especially due to sufferers. Persons who speak much themselves generally most impatient of others. The Scripture rule—"Swift to hear, slow to speak."—"And after that I have spoken, mock on." A troubled spirit often eased by utterance. Sad when those who ought to be comforters in our affliction become mockers (ch. xvii. 2). One of Job's greatest trials to be mocked by his friends (ch. xii. 4). As much patience required to endure mockings as scourgings (Heb. xi. 36).

3. *Justifies his displeasure* (verse 4). "As for me, is my complaint to man? And if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled?" (*margin*, "shortened;" same word rendered "discouraged," Num. xxi. 4; "grieved," Jud. x. 16; "vexed," Jud. xvi. 16; "straitened," Mic. ii. 7; "hasty," Prov. xiv. 29; "anguish," Exod. vi. 9). Sorrow contracts the heart as joy enlarges it (Ps. cxix. 32). The flesh is soon angry, while grace is long suffering. Job complains not to man, but to God, as the author of his troubles. His complaint both *of* God and *to* God; the former the complaint of the *flesh*, the latter that of the spirit. Grace teaches to look away from instruments and second causes to God Himself. So David (2 Sam. xvi. 10).

Job justifies his displeasure on the ground that God dealt so hardly with him. His language too much that of the prophet at Nineveh and Elijah under the juniper-tree. The flesh always and in all alike. Thinks that under severe trouble we "do well to be angry." Grace enables us to kiss the rod that smites us, and to say, "Abba, Father; not my will, but Thine be done." Jesus rather than Job our pattern in affliction. Our privilege in Christ to be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (Col. i. 11).

4. *Invites solemn attention to the astounding fact of suffering saints and prosperous sinners* (verse 5). "Mark me and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth" [in silent awe and wonder]. God's dealings in Providence to be regarded with reverence and awe. Habakkuk's experience (Hab. iii. 16); David's (Ps. cxix. 120). The sufferings of saints and prosperity of sinners a subject mysterious and inscrutable till read in the light of inspired Scripture (Ps. lxxiii. 17). Anomalies in God's government awaiting the explanations of eternity.

Expresses his own feelings in reference to this mysterious fact and its influence upon himself (verse 6). "Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh." Our own experience, as well as that of others, often to be remembered with trembling (Lam. iii. 19, 20). The part of grace not only to tremble at God's *word*, but God's *works* (Is. lxvi. 2). The speaker to be duly affected himself by the truths he addresses to others. Must weep himself if he would have his hearers weep.

II. Problem proposed. Commences with a question implying an undoubted fact (verse 7).

"Wherefore do the wicked live (or, enjoy life), become old, yea mighty in power" (or wealth). Three facts implied regarding the ungodly in this life:—1. They "live;" are permitted to continue in life and to enjoy it. 2. In many instances "become old;" ordinarily viewed as an element of prosperity and a mark of Divine favour. The hoary head not always found in the way of righteousness. 3. "Become mighty in power" and substance; enjoy great worldly prosperity (Ps. lxxiii. 12). Such facts hardly to be expected under the government of a righteous God. The perplexity and almost despair of Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 2–13). The 73rd Psalm a commentary on this chapter of Job. Such facts suggest inquiry as to the cause. Scripture furnishes the reply. (See Rom. ii. 4; 1 Tim. i. 16; Ps. lxxiii. 18; Ecc. viii. 11—13; Luke ii. 35, &c.; Ps. xvi. 4; Rom. ix. 22). The present not the only state of man's existence. This life a state of probation and discipline, not of retribution. The present a time of forbearance and mercy; God waiting for the sinner's repentance in order to be gracious to him. God's goodness intended to lead to repentance. The ungodly spared in order to have time for repentance; "the long-suffering of God is salvation;" not willing that any should perish (2 Peter iii. 9—15). Their prosperity an exercise for the faith of the godly. A standing evidence of a time ture retribution. A monument to the

glory of the Divine patience and long-suffering. Renders the impenitence of men inexcusable and justifies all their future punishment. Demonstrates the inferiority of earthly to heavenly blessings.

III. Description of the prosperity of the ungodly (verses 8—13).

1. In relation to their *children* (verse 8). "Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes." Their children obtain a firm and prosperous position in the world, and that while they themselves still live to see and enjoy it. Important elements in a man's earthly felicity:—(1) To have a numerous offspring; (2) To see his children prosperous and established in the world; (3) To have them continuing to live with or near him; (4) To live to see and rejoice in their earthly prosperity and happiness. Some of these elements formerly enjoyed by Job, though no longer so. The happiness of the ungodly, in relation to their children, again touched upon under another aspect in verse 11. "They send forth their little ones (out of doors, under a guardian or guide), and their children dance" (frisk sportively as lambs in the pasture). Pleasing picture of domestic happiness and prosperity. The children viewed as still young and under their parents' guardianship. Healthy, happy, frolicking children a pleasant spectacle, especially to parents' eyes. A large ingredient in the cup of earthly bliss. Homes lighted up with children's innocent hilarities the gift of a gracious God.

2. *Domestic security and freedom from affliction and trouble* (verse 9). "Their houses are safe from fear (of any hostile attack or elemental violence), neither is the rod of God upon them." The contrast to the case of Job and his children. Sons experience chastisement from which slaves are exempt. Freedom from afflictions and trials no mark of a child of God. The ungodly "have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Ps. lv. 19). Ill sign for a man when God will not spend a rod upon him [*Brookes*].

3. *Success in business and freedom from worldly losses* (verse 10). "Their bull gendereth and faileth not; their cow calveth and casteth not her calf" (by an untimely birth). Matters in which human skill and industry seem to have but little to do. As if a blessing rested on all the work of their hands, and on all their belongings. Their very cattle prosperous and fruitful. People in everything fortunate, and, as the world say, lucky.

4. *Enjoyment of music and festivity* (verse 12). "They take (or 'lift up' [their voice] to) the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at (or, trip merrily to) the sound of the organ" (or pipe—musical instruments of greatest antiquity [Gen. iv. 21; xxxi. 27]; the "organ" with us a comparatively modern invention). The life of the persons in question one, to a large extent, of festivity and enjoyment. Their dwellings abundantly enlivened with the sound of music, vocal and instrumental. The ungodly no strangers to the hilarity of music and dancing. "The harp and viol, the tabret and pipe, are in their feasts, while they regard not the work of the Lord" (Is. v. 12). "They chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos vi. 5, 6). Musical instruments an invention of the descendants of Cain (Gen. iv. 21). Yet

Music

one of God's choicest earthly blessings. Its influence beneficial on the individual and the household. Its effects on man's nature manifold and important. Rests fatigue. Relieves pain. Subdues passion. Soothes suffering. Mitigates sorrow. Allays nervous irritation. Resists melancholy. Saul's evil spirit yielded to the sweet sounds of David's harp (1 Sam. xvi. 23). Inspires courage and inspirits the brave. The rousing strains of Highland bagpipes helped to win the day at Waterloo. Music powerful in the conflict of life. A means of moral culture. Assists devotion. Calms and elevates the mind for the communication and reception of Divine truth. The prophet calls first for the aid of a minstrel (2 Kings iii. 15). Music a Divine art and heavenly employment. Heaven filled with music. Something of divinity in music more than the ear discovers [*Sir T. Browne*]. The beneficial effect of soft and sweet sounds, especially of sacred music, upon the sick, an acknowledged fact. Music "whispered to the weary spirit" sometimes the only sound to be endured by the sick and sorrowful. Music to be consecrated to the glory of its Divine Author. "A table without music little better than a manger" [*Epictetus*]. Especially true of the song of praise and thanksgiving. Music, like other Divine gifts, often desecrated to the service of the god of this world. The Enemy's object to make a sinful and worldly life as agreeable as possible. Helps men to forget death and a judgment to come in the sweet sounds of earthly music. Nero played on his harp while gazing on Rome in flames, the probable effect of his own wickedness.

5. *A joyous life and an easy and painless death.* Verse 13.—"They spend their days in wealth (prosperity or pleasure), and in a moment go down to the grave" (without

any painful, lingering disease, or without inward terrors of conscience). A case probably at least as frequent as that described in such tragic terms by Zophar (chap. xx. 16—28). Exemplified in the rich fool (Luke xii. 16—20), and in Dives (Luke xvi. 19—22). Observe—

(1). *The main concern of a godless man is about his wealth or worldly happiness.* In regard to wealth, his care is—(1) To get it; (2) To keep it; (3) To enjoy it.

(2). *An easy death after a prosperous life one of the desires of the ungodly, and frequently experienced by them.* Such a death a blessing to the godly; to the ungodly a curse. An uneasy death-bed a thousand times better than an undone eternity.

(3). *A godless life often finished with a sudden and unprepared-for death.* The sinner's greatest misery only to discover his misery when too late to escape it. To a believer sudden death is sudden glory.

IV. The hardening effect of this prosperity on the wicked themselves.

Verse 14.—"Therefore they say (in works if not in words): Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have if we pray to Him?" (*Heb.*: "If we meet Him?"—*i.e.*, in a way of prayer). God's goodness often perverted by the ungodly to an end the opposite of that intended. That goodness improved leads men to repentance; abused, drives them farther from it. Unsanctified wealth a blessing perverted into a curse. Riches, with the heart in them, separate men still farther from God. One effect of Divine grace is that men "fear the Lord and His goodness." The tendency of fallen human nature is to grow proud and independent of God in prosperity. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" (Deut. xxxii. 15). The terrible enmity of the carnal mind against God perhaps most conspicuous in prosperity. Ordinarily, gifts and kindness attract and attach to the giver.—The text an awful exhibition of man's

Natural Depravity.

That depravity displayed—

1. In ingratitude and enmity towards God "Depart from us."

2. In dislike to God's ways. "We desire not," &c.

3. In pride and independence in regard to God. "What is the Almighty?" &c.

4. In infidelity and unbelief. "What profit should we have?" &c.

These verses a comment on David's testimony concerning the ungodly in every age. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1). An illustration of the Apostle's language in reference to the unrenewed: "Alienated from the life of God;" "Without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12; iv. 18). The history of mankind, the literature of every land, and the observation of every day, a humbling confirmation of the patriarch's description of—

"An impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
Who made them an intruder on their joys."

From the whole passage observe—

1. *The misery of the ungodly that they are far from God, and desire to be still farther.* "They say unto God: Depart from us." To be weary and impatient of God's presence the strongest evidence of a wicked heart. What constitutes the joy and desire of a saint is the torment and aversion of an impenitent sinner. Awful result to the ungodly man when God grants him the wish of his unrenewed heart.

2. *Impenitent men do not desire to know God's ways, much less to walk in them.* "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." God's ways are—(1) His own doings and procedure; (2) The conduct He prescribes to His intelligent creatures. The mark of a gracious heart to desire to *know* God's ways; still more to *walk* in them. Men's sin and misery not to *know* God's ways; still more not to have the *desire* to know them.

3. *God's service founded on a just consideration of the Almighty.* "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?" Irreligion the result of spiritual blindness and ignorance of God. The Almighty infinitely worthy to be served—(1) For what He is in Himself—good, holy, just, wise, faithful, and powerful; (2) For what He is to us—our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and in Christ our Redeemer.

4. *The part of infidelity and ungodliness to question the utility of prayer.* "What profit should we have if we pray to Him?" God's purpose and plan to give to the humble and believing asker (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Matt. vii. 7; Phil. iv. 6, 7; James i. 5, 6; iv. 2, 3). For answer to the question: "What profit should we have?" &c., ask—(1) Those who live a life of prayer; (2) A dying bed; (3) The day of judgment. If religion costs something, the want of it one day found to cost much more. The mark of a depraved nature to ask, not "What is *right?*" but "What *profit* should we have?" The profitable only found in the right. Duty first; utility next.

5. *The whole Bible and the history of the Church of God on earth an answer to the question of infidelity in the text.*

Abraham's servant prayed to God, and God directed him to the person who should be a wife to his master's son and heir (Gen. xxiv. 10—20).

Jacob prayed to God, and God inclined the heart of his irritated brother, so that they met in friendship and peace (Gen. xxxii. 24—30; xxxiii. 1—4).

Samson prayed to God, and God showed him a well of water, where he quenched his burning thirst, and so lived to judge Israel (Judges xv. 18—20).

David prayed, and God defeated the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Sam. xv. 31; xvi. 20—23; xvii. 14—23).

Daniel prayed, and God enabled him both to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream and the interpretation of it (Dan. ii. 16—23).

Nehemiah prayed, and God inclined the heart of the King of Persia to grant him leave of absence to visit and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. i.11; ii. 1—6).

Esther and Mordecai prayed, and God defeated the purpose of Haman, and saved the Jews from destruction (Esther iv. 15—17; vi. 7, 8).

The believers in Jerusalem prayed, and God opened the prison-doors and set Peter at liberty, when Herod had resolved upon his death (Acts xii. 1—12).

The profit from prayer, however, not confined to direct answers.

Paul prayed that the thorn in the flesh might be removed, and his prayer brought a large increase of spiritual strength, while the thorn, perhaps, remained (2 Cor. xii. 7—10). Prayer like the dove that Noah sent forth, and which blessed him not only when it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, but when it never returned at all.

The question which the Patriarch puts into the mouth of the ungodly and infidel in his day boldly repeated in our own; as indicated in the famous *prayer-test* lately proposed by a Professor in one of the Scotch Universities, and a leading member of the British Association for the Promotion of Scientific Knowledge.

Observe in regard to—

Prayer.

(1.) *The profit from prayer taught by the natural instinct of the human race.* Natural to men, even the most ungodly and unenlightened, to think of calling upon some superior Being in the time of danger or of trouble. The erection of the altar to the unknown God at Athens due to this feeling on the part of the Athenians. The conduct of the heathen sailors in the ship which was to convey Jonah to Tarshish, an indication of the feelings and views of humanity (Jonah i. 5).

(2.) *Profit from prayer a natural and necessary conclusion from the acknowledged Fatherhood of God.* An instinct of nature for a child to apply to a father in difficulty or distress.

(3.) *Answers to prayer only desirable when our prayers are according to the will of God.* If otherwise, answers to prayer rather a bane than a blessing. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls" (Ps. cvi 15).

(4.) *One part of the Holy Spirit's office to teach those who are under His guidance what to ask for* (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

(5.) *Profit from prayer on the part of those who are living in rebellion against God, a matter of the merest mercy.* The practice of sin a sufficient reason why prayer may not be answered. Righteous with God to say as He did to the Jews: "Yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah i. 15). Iniquity only regarded *in the heart* sufficient to hinder answers to prayer (Ps. lxvi. 18).

(6.) *Access to God and assurance of answers to prayer the precious fruit of the incarnation, death, and intercession of the Son of God* (Heb. iv. 16). Christ, or the Son of God in our nature, the only and divinely-constituted medium of communication between fallen men and a righteous and holy God. The ladder which Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it (Gen. xxviii. 12; John i. 51).

(7.) *True prayer a "meeting" with God.* (*Heb.*) "What profit if we *meet* with Him?" Prayer vain if not a meeting with God. Christ the meeting-place between a Holy God and sinful man (Heb. iv. 14—16.) Figured by the mercy-seat (Ez. xxv. 22). Christ the only way to the Father, and only Mediator between God and men (John xiv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5). God's love to man manifested in His providing Christ as a meeting-place between Himself and sinners. In and through Christ, men able now to meet with God on a throne of grace; apart from Christ, God only to be met with on a throne of judgment. Men must either meet with God in prayer now, or meet with Him in judgment hereafter. A meeting with God on the part of men certain and inevitable, sooner or later. The question is, of what nature shall the meeting be? May be one to our unspeakable joy, or to our everlasting sorrow. To meet with God in prayer through Christ now, is life; to meet with Him in judgment without Christ hereafter, is death. Madness to put away a meeting with God till we can only meet with Him as an angry Judge. God, in Christ, a Father waiting with open arms to receive

His penitent and praying children; God, apart from Christ, a consuming fire to devour His impenitent and prayerless adversaries. A sinner's blessedness to meet with God as, in Christ, reconciled and reconciling the World to Himself.

V. Job's protest against a life of prosperous ungodliness (verse 16). "Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Observe—1. *Worldly prosperity and earthly blessings not less a good because abused*—a good, though not the chief good. The part of sin—(1) to pervert what is good in itself into an evil; (2) To make a *temporal* good the chief good instead of an eternal one. 2. *The good enjoyed by the ungodly neither a satisfying nor a lasting one*; "their good is not in their hand,"—a thing neither to be grasped nor retained. Mighty difference between the good of the believer and the worldling. The one substance, the other shadow; the one lasting and eternal, the other momentary and perishing. The ungodly unable to retain their prosperity and happiness a moment beyond God's pleasure. A thousand accidents able to rob them of it at any moment. No real good in their hand, and still less in their hope. 3. *Care to be taken not to be influenced by the prosperity of the godless and worldly.* (1) By consideration of the truth and reality of their case; their prosperity only temporary, and their happiness unreal; "their good not in their hand;" (2) By steadfast repudiation of their principles and life. "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." Consider, in regard to—

The counsel of the wicked,

First: *what it is.* The principles upon which they act and by which their life is governed. These are—(1) To make the enjoyment of the present life their chief good,—their first if not their only aim—take care for this life, and let the next take care of itself. (2) To gain that enjoyment in any way they can with safety:—if honestly, well; if not, in any way you can. (3) To depend on their own endeavours for what they desire, instead of God:—"Mine own hand hath gotten me this wealth." (4) To ignore God and eternity, heaven and hell, either as having no existence or no relation to themselves. The worldling's creed—no reality but what is visible or cognizable by themselves. The seen and sensible only substance, all else shadow and moonshine. (5) To despise the provision of a Saviour. Not this man, but Barabbas; (6) To care for one's self and immediate connections, and leave others to do the same. Attend to number one.

Second: Job's *conduct in regard to this counsel.* "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." The principles and practice of the ungodly, not only to be put away, but *far* away from us. Safest to stand at the greatest distance from sin. Joseph kept far from it, and had God's blessing in the dungeon. David went near it and got broken bones. Sin an infectious plague; therefore not to be approached. The surest way not to walk in the counsel of the wicked is to keep far from it. "Enter not into the path of the wicked; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." Occasions of sin to be avoided as well as sin itself. The harlot's door to be avoided. He who carries gunpowder must keep far away from sparks. God only keeps from acts of sin those who keep from occasions of it. Look not intently on what you may not love entirely. (*Brookes.*) The counsel of the wicked to be put far from us—(1) In our *judgment.* To be viewed in its real character. Condemned and repudiated as what it really is—wicked, abominable, destructive. (2) In our *will and purpose.* Our language to be, what have I to do with idols? (Hos. xiv. 8). To choose with Mary the good part. To say with David: "Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God." "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments" (Ps. cxix. 106, 115). So Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat" (Dan. i. 8). (3) In our *practice.* Purpose to become practice. The man only blessed who "*walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Ps. i. 1). Our life to be governed by opposite principles.

Third: *why* is the counsel of the ungodly to be put far from us? From its character and issues. The principles of the ungodly and worldly are—(1) *Foolish and unreasonble.* Only the fool says in his heart, no God. Absurd only to believe what we see. Madness to prefer the enjoyment of a day to that of a life-time; the enjoyment of a short life-time to that of an endless eternity. The part of a fool to make careful provision for the body and neglect the soul which shall eternally survive it. (2) *Wicked.* Intensely wicked to ignore and repudiate the God that made, preserves, and every moment sustains us; a God possessed of every excellence—the Author of our Being and our Well-being. (3) *Destructive.* Certain and endless ruin the result of a sinful and worldly life,—of despising God, and rejecting His Son, Jesus Christ. "All they that hate me love death." What is sown here is reaped hereafter (Gal. vi. 7, 8; Ps. xvi. 4; Is. l. 11; Rom. iii. 16; vi. 21, 23; John viii. 21, 24).

Fourth: *How* is the counsel of the wicked

to be put far away from us? Not easily. The counsel of the wicked is—(1) *Natural to a depraved heart.* The carnal mind enmity against God. To follow the counsel of the wicked is to swim with the stream. (2) *Popular.* The way of the multitude. To put it far away is to be singular. Not always easy to come out and be separate. (3) *Pleasing to the flesh.* Sin wears a serpent's skin. The forbidden fruit pleasing to the eye, and sweet to the taste. The principles and practice of the wicked and worldly only to be put far away from us—(1) *By a change of heart.* A corrupt tree only brings forth evil fruit. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c. "Ye must be born again." Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (2) *By acceptance of the offered Saviour and reliance on His grace.* In looking to Him who died for our sin we are delivered from its power, and receive strength to overcome it. The cross of Christ our only deliverance from the counsel of the ungodly (Gal. vi. 14). (3) *By the due use of means.* (i.) *Prayer.* Spiritual strength given to waiting upon God and in answer to prayer (Is. xl. 22—31; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, 37). (ii.) *Reading* and *meditation* in the *Scriptures* (Ps. xvii. 4; cxix. 11; John xv. 3; xviii. 17). (iii.) Contemplation of the Saviour's *character* and *cross* (2 Cor. iii. 18; Gal. vi. 14). (iv.) Consideration of the *character* and *consequences* of *sin.*

Job's practical renunciation of the counsel of the ungodly already a fact. Resolution is to become reality. The future to be translated into the present. "Let it be" to become "it is."

VI. The final misery of the ungodly, notwithstanding present prosperity (verse 17). "How oft is the candle of the wicked put out." May be read either as a question implying the rarity of the case, or as an exclamation implying its frequency. The "candle," or prosperity, of the wicked, extinguished by death, though frequently before it. Job's main assertion, that the wicked often live, become old, and die in prosperity and ease. Yet their end destruction not the less. Asaph stumbled at the prosperity of the wicked till he went into the sanctuary and understood their end (Ps. lxxiii. 17).—"How oft cometh their destruction upon them." Not always, nor even usually, visited with signal judgment and a miserable death. Occasional cases as warnings, and as indications of a future judgment. Examples: the Deluge; destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha; Haman; Saul, Herod.—"God distributeth sorrows in His anger. Observe—1. *Continuance of outward prosperity consistent with secret wrath.* The abuse of Divine gifts the greatest provocation of Divine anger. God's wrath certain against ungodliness, however long its manifestation may be withheld. God angry with the wicked every day. Wrath treasured up against the day of wrath. (2) The *sorrows of the ungodly often sent in anger; those of the godly always in love.* Those the most terrible sorrows that are distributed in God's anger. (3) *Sorrows distributed by God as well as mercies.* All sorrows distributed by a Divine hand; only, some distributed in anger, others in love. Trouble not from the dust. Wisely meted out, whether in mercy or in judgment. The cup mingled and measured, and sooner or later put into the hand of each. The cup of sorrow held out to a believer by a Father's hand, to be exchanged ere long for the cup of joy. To be put at last into the hand of the ungodly (Is. li. 22 23; Luke xvi. 25). (4) *Terrible end of the wicked after a life of prosperity and pleasure* (verse 18). "They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away, (*margin*, "stealeth away," rapidly and unexpectedly as a thief in the night, Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10; Rev. xvi. 15). Frequent comparison of the ungodly to the fragments of straw and the chaff separated from the wheat on the open threshing-floor, exposed to the wind on a lofty situation, and thus carried violently, suddenly, and rapidly away by it, while the wheat is left for the garner (Ps. i. 4; Is. xxix. 5; Hos. xiii. 3). Indicates—(1) God's long-continued but exhausted patience; (2) The worthlessness of the ungodly; (3) Their final separation from the godly; (4) Their utter and irremediable destruction.

VII. A sinful life often punished in its consequences on the sinner's children (verse 19). "God layeth up his iniquity (or the punishment of it) for his children; he rewardeth him and he shall know (or feel) it His eyes shall see his destruction (implying more than mere destruction itself; he shall have full and bitter experience of it; or shall see it approaching and yet be unable to escape from it), and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty [as before he drank iniquity, which is the cause of it]. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" Perhaps an objection to his statement here anticipated and answered. If God does not punish the ungodly man in this life, yet, say the three friends, He punishes him in his children after him. But, replies Job, the punishment ought to be inflicted on himself; and he, not his children, ought, according to

your principles, to feel it. His eyes ought to see his own destruction. For what has he to do with his family after him when he his dead? Observe—(1) *An undeniable truth that a man's sins often entail their consequences on his children* Embodied in the second commandment (Ex. xx. 5). Temporal consequences often entailed apart from sins in the children. The parents' sins frequently inherited by the children, and their consequences along with them. A man in some degree punished in the person of his children. His children closely bound up with him as part of himself. A natural desire that it should be well with them after his death. His children's suffering after his death an aggravation of his own. (2) *Sin, however, mainly punished in the person himself who commits it.* Hence, that punishment not always inflicted in this life, as Zophar and his friends maintained. No less certainly however in the next, as maintained by Job.

VIII. Assertion of God's infinite wisdom and knowledge (verse 22). "Shall any teach God knowledge? Seeing he judgeth those that are high." God, unable to receive any accession to His wisdom or knowledge from the most intelligent of His creatures. The highest intelligences under His government and control. God universally acknowledged as the Judge and Ruler of heaven and earth (Gen. xviii. 25). Angels, devils, and men of every rank, under His sway and jurisdiction. Hell and destruction naked and open before Him. The hearts and counsels of men and angels exposed to His view. The expulsion of fallen angels an example of His judging "those that are high." The judge of angels not to be directed by puny men (Rom. xi. 34; 1 Cor. ii. 16). He who judges angels needs no instruction how to deal with men. Hence—(1) The case of each safe in his hands; (2) No room for questioning or cavilling on the part of any of His creatures in reference to His providential dealings with them.

IX. Sovereignty and inscrutableness of Divine Providence. Men variously dealt with both in life and death without apparent reference to character and desert (verse 23). "One dieth in his full strength [with unimpaired health and vigour], being wholly at ease and quiet [in the hey-day of prosperity]. His breasts (*margin*, 'milk pails') are full of milk (or, his vessels, intestines, or sides are full of fat), and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul (with an experience the opposite of the former, grief and pain pursuing him to the end), and never eateth with pleasure" (or, "never enjoys pleasure,"—a sufferer during his whole life) Varieties everywhere in men's experience, both in life and in death. These varieties often and generally due rather to the sovereignty of the Divine Disposer than to the character and merits of individuals. Love and hatred not to be discovered by the external events in our lot. One event to all (Ecc. ix. 2).—Death equally the end of all (verse 25). "They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them," Lessons from this unversality of death:—(1) *Contentment with one's lot.* External differences only for a short period of this present life. These assigned now in infinite wisdom, and all forgotten in the grave. (2) *Humility.* The dust our final resting-place. Worms by-and-by our principal covering; (3) *Necessity of immediate preparation and constant readiness for death.* Nothing more certain than death, and more uncertain than the time and circumstances. The grave a resting-place for the body; the soul, immortal and immaterial, has its dwelling elsewhere. Its place in the spirit-world according to its character and deeds in this. After death the judgment (Matt. xxv. 31—46; Rom. ii. 6—10). In the eternal world the rich and poor often change places. Lazarus comforted, Dives tormented (Luke xvi. 25).

X. Job's remonstrance with his friends on their erroneous and uncharitable views (verses 27—30).

1. *Exposes their secret cogitations regarding him* (verse 27). "Behold I know your thoughts, and the devises which ye wrongfully imagine against me. For ye say [within yourselves], where is the house of the prince (the rich or munificent chief—alluding to Job himself, whose house was now desolate, and that of his eldest son in ruins)? and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked?" (*margin*, "the tent of the tabernacles;" *Heb.*, the tent of the dwelling-places; either that of the rich chief in the midst of those of his household and clan, [chap. xxv. 29] or his house as divided into various apartments). The secret surmise of Job's friends that the desolation of his own house, and that of his son, was a Divine retribution. From this desolation they injuriously conclude they had been wicked men. The errors of the Jews in Christ's day, in reference to the slaughtered Galilæans and the disaster in Siloam (Luke xiii. 1—5.) That of the Miletians, in regard to Paul and the viper which fastened on his hand (Acts xxviii. 4).

2. *Refers them to the testimony of men of travel and observation* (verse 29). "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens?" (or, "acknowledge their testimonies,"—the

examples met with in their travels, and related by them to others, or their written communications, which are proofs of what I now advance). In the early ages of the world, and still to a great extent in the East, most of the information as to events in other lands obtained by travellers. That information, however, probably to some extent committed early to letters, here called "tokens,"—signs or marks (Gen. iv. 15). Moses directed by God to write the song he delivered before his death, as well as the law of commandments (Deut. xxxi 19—24). Letters among the earliest inventions. Probably at first hieroglyphics, or figures of animate or inanimate objects. (See ch. xix. 23, 24).

3. *Testimony of travellers in relation to the wicked* (verse 30). "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction (spared often and long in this world, even in the midst of calamities that overtake others, though sure to be punished in the next, if not ultimately in this, as in the case of Pharaoh)? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath" (or, "they are led [as in a pompous procession] to the day of wrath," which sooner or later overtakes them; or, "they are led [in safety] in the day of wrath" which comes upon the community; *margin*, the day of *wraths*—great or accumulated wrath, as Rev. vi. 17). Job's first position—God destroys, by external calamities, the righteous and the wicked indiscriminately (ch. ix. 22, 23). His second—The wicked are often spared in the midst of such calamities,—spared in ease and prosperity,—and spared long. Rests his assertions on facts. These facts not invalidated by occasional examples of the contrary. These in perfect harmony with, and even when rightly viewed, a confirmation of, a future retribution. Every day of wrath in this world points its finger to a still greater one in the next.

XI. Returns to the prosperity and power of the wicked as following them even to the grave.

The ungodly often so powerful as to escape all reproof and punishment for their crimes in this world (verse 31). "Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done?" None bold enough for the one, or powerful enough for the other. The case of John the Baptist in relation to Herod the Tetrarch, a rare one, especially in those early times. Verse 32.—"Yet shall he (or 'even this man') be brought (conveyed in pomp and honour) to the grave. (*Margin*, 'graves,' the place of graves; or the sepulchral grot, with its various apartments and numerous niches for the dead; or an eminent and magnificent grave—a large and splendid mausoleum, perhaps a pyramid); and shall remain in the tomb," (*Margin*, "shall watch in the heap;" shall appear still to live at his tomb, as embalmed and preserved from corruption, or as represented by his statue or other memorial; or "watch shall be kept [by others] at his tomb," to preserve it and do him honour). Honour not only attends him in life, but follows him to the tomb both in and after his death. So "the rich man died and was buried," *i.e.* had a large and splendid funeral; nothing said of the burial of Lazarus (Luke xvi. 22). The pompous funeral of the wicked also a noticeable object in the days of the royal preacher (Ecc. viii. 10). Verse 33.—"The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him." Buried, like great men, at the foot of a mountain where the winter stream keeps moist the sods that cover him. He has a pleasant resting-place for his remains, and the sod lies softly upon him. Apparently as enviable in his death as he had been in his life. Himself still supposed to enjoy in the spirit-world the honour done to his earthly remains, and the agreeable circumstances which attend them. Pleasing delusion of the imagination! The experience of the rich man in hell (Hades or the spirit-world) the opposite of that suggested by his costly funeral and beautifully adorned grave.—"And every man shall draw after him as there are innumerable before him." His death no solitary case. Death the common lot of fallen humanity, without respect to character or conduct. The wicked abundantly accompanied in the spirit-world. Company however no alleviation. The second desire of the rich man in Hades, that his five brethren might not come also to that place of torment (Luke xvi. 28). The presence of others rather an aggravation than a relief.

XII. Conclusion (verse 34). The friend's consolation vain because grounded on false principles. "How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing that in your answers there remaineth falsehood" (*Margin*, "transgressions," opposition to the truth, or, malice and evil intent). Consolation, to be of any value, to be grounded on right principles. Must be—(1) *True*, in the *matter*; according to the Word of God, the only infallible standard. (2) *Suitable* in its *application*; adapted to the circumstances of the case, and of the individual addressed. Truth misapplied becomes error. (3) *Loving*, in its *manner*—truth spoken in love. Truth, spoken harshly and uncharitably, irritates rather than heals the wounded spirit. "Falsehood" in the answers and arguments of Job's

friends, inasmuch as they maintained—(1) That God acts, in His government of the world, in a way which He does not; uniformly visiting the sins of the ungodly upon them in the present life, and rewarding the godly with worldly prosperity and ease. (2) That, according to these principles, those who are great sufferers must be great sinners. (3) That the only way to be delivered from such suffering, and to enjoy such prosperity, is by acknowledgment of sin and a turning from it to God,—to be with that view immediately made by the sufferer, and therefore by Job himself. *Malice* or evil intent in their answers; their aim being to make Job a grievous transgressor in the sight of God, and one who was suffering justly the punishment of his sins—the "devices the wrongfully imagined against him" (ch. xxi.). Their offence not only against truth but charity.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIRD SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ THE TEMANITE.

Remonstrates with Job on his self-righteousness, and plainly charges him with grievous transgressions as the cause of his present sufferings; concludes with promises of prosperity and blessing on his repentance.

I. Reproves his apparent pride and self-righteousness (verse 2—4) God laid under no obligation by his piety. "Can a man be profitable unto God as he that is wise is profitable to himself? (or, when he by acting wisely profits himself; *Margin*, 'if he may be profitable, does his good success depend on himself?') Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou act righteous? or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for fear of thee (lest He suffer injury and loss by thy conduct)? Will He enter with thee into judgment (to recover His right as an injured person)?" Observe—

1. *God under no obligation to treat men better than He does.* God no man's debtor. A secret feeling at the bottom of men's complaint against His providential dealings, as if they were wronged by Him and had a right to expect better treatment. On the contrary, all treated infinitely better than they deserve. All good in men is from God, not themselves. Men come infinitely short of rendering to God what He has a right to as their Creator, Preserver, and constant Benefactor.

2. *God's glory and happiness independent of man's conduct.* God no loser by men's want of religion, nor gainer by their practice of it (Ps. xvi. 2). God reproves men not from *fear* of them, but from *love* to them (Rev. iii. 19). Men never too bad for Him to love them, nor too great for Him to fear them. God neither rebukes the good from unkindness, nor the great from fear. Still true—(1) That men may, through grace, promote God's glory and advance His kingdom in the world; (2) That He has pleasure in holy men and in their holy lives (Ps. cxlvii. 11; Prov. xi. 20); (3) That men have it in their power to render to God His rightful claim, or to rob Him of what is His (Mal. iii. 8). This the grievous sin not only of the Jews, but of men in general (Matt. xxi. 34, 41).

3. *True wisdom always profitable to the possessor of it.* That wisdom the fear of God and a life of godliness. Wisdom the knowledge, choice, and pursuit of the best end by the best means. Here equivalent to being "righteous," or "making one's ways perfect" or upright. Profitable in regard both to body and soul, time and eternity. Godliness with contentment great gain (1 Tim. vi. 6). The gains of religion infinitely greater than its losses. Wisdom's ways pleasantness and peace. Length of days in her right hand, in her left riches and honour. Godliness profitableness unto all things (1 Tim. iv. 8). No good which is not gained by it; nothing lost by it which we are not the better by losing.

II. Charges Job with multiplied and grievous transgressions (verse 5—9).

1. *In general terms* (verse 5). "Is not thy wickedness great and thine iniquities infinite?" True, more or less, of all men, Job included. Not however in the sense of Eliphaz. According to Eliphaz, Job's wickedness great in comparison with that of other men, and with his own. The thought that of the Pharisee in the temple.—Great and multiplied transgressions humbly acknowledged by the best (Ps. xxv. 11; xl. 12; Ezra ix. 61). The certain result of a fallen and corrupt nature (Matt. xv. 19; Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). Corrupt streams constantly flow from a corrupt spring. Yet along with this, in Job and in all good men, a nature opposed to evil. Hence—(1) the evil resisted, held in check, weakened, and more or less overcome; (2) Good, though imperfectly, yet with more or less uniformity performed. Truly good men, in virtue of a two-fold nature, both saints and sinners. The former *with* their will, the latter *against*

it. Good men do good, but not all they would, or any *as* they would. Do evil, but not all they otherwise would, nor would they do any (Gal. v. 17). Observe—(i.) *All wickedness great*; as committed—(*a*) Against a great God; (*b*) Against great obligations to the contrary; (*c*) With comparatively little inducement to commit it; (*d*) With great evil as the result both to ourselves and others. (ii.) *The wickedness of some greater than that of others*; as committed—(*a*) With greater boldness; (*b*) Under great obligations to the contrary; (*c*) With greater knowledge and means of resistance; (*d*) With less temptation to the commission of it. (iii.) *Men's iniquities infinite*—as (*a*) Against an infinite God; (*b*) Against infinite obligations to the contrary; (*c*) Numberless; (*d*) Incessant during life; (*e*) But for Divine grace, continuing to be committed throughout eternity; (*f*) Attended with infinitely disastrous results. Sins committed against infinite majesty and goodness have in them an infinite malignity and greatness.

2. *Charges him with specific crimes* (verse 6—9.) (1) *Cruelty and wrong* (verse 6). "Thou hast taken a pledge from the poor for nought,"—unjustly, when nothing, or next to nothing, was due;—taking his garment from him for that purpose without restoring it to him by sunset, as afterwards required by the law (Ex. xxii. 26—27), and as was always the part of a right-minded man,—the poor man's garment by day being also his covering by night. Sometimes the bed itself taken as a pledge by rapacious and unfeeling creditors (Prov. xxii. 27). The sin of not restoring the pledge spoken of as not uncommon among the Jews in the days of the prophets (Ezek. xviii. 12; Amos. i. 8). This alleged sin of Job's marked by Eliphaz as particularly heinous from its being committed against a "brother." The "brother" not necessarily a relative, or even a countryman. All men brethren. All wrong done to our fellowmen done to our "brother." "Sirs, ye are brethren,"—a powerful reason for not wronging one another (Acts. vii. 26; Exod. ii. 11), &c. — The charge enlarged upon. "Thou hast stripped the naked (the poor and poorly clad) of their clothing," —the large upper garment, or Arab hyke, worn as a garment by day and serving as a covering to sleep in at night. Among the articles taken and kept by rapacious and hard-hearted creditors. This charge the very opposite of Job's character (ch. xxix. 12—17; xxxi. 19, 20). (2) *Want of kindness and charity to the poor and needy* (verse 7.) "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast witholden bread from the hungry." Acts of kindness and hospitality particularly required in the East, and especially at that early period: no inns for travellers; people often poor; travelling generally performed on foot; climate hot and creating thirst; water often scarce and always precious; inhabitants often plundered by marauders, and forced to wander from house and home by invaders. Hence duties of hospitality held peculiarly sacred among Orientals, especially in Arabia (Gen. xviii. 4. 5; xix. 2; xxi. 14, 15; xxviii. 11; Ex. ii. 15). Fountains even in cities often bequeathed by wealthy Arabs for the free use of the poor, as well as money to provide persons to dispense it gratuitously in the streets. Job's actual conduct the reverse of that here ascribed to him (ch. xxxi. 17, 32). (3) *Partiality to the rich* (verse 8). "But as for the mighty man, he had the earth (or land), and the honourable man dwelt in it." Reference probably intended to Job's judicial conduct as an Arab chief, emir, or prince. The charge that of neglecting and wronging the poor, while the rich and mighty were favoured. The former expelled from their homes and inheritances to make room for the latter. Violence and wrong on the part of the great connived at. Partiality to the rich a grievous offence in the sight of God (Prov. xxviii. 21). Especially on the part of judges and magistrates (Lev. xix. 15). Condemned as existing in early Christian churches (James ii. 1—9). To feast the rich and neglect to feed the poor, the opposite of Christ's rule (Luke xiv. 12—14). The peculiar temptation of the rich. (4) *Neglect and oppression of the widow and fatherless* (verse 9). "Thou hast sent the widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken,"—their support and means of subsistence taken from them, either by Job himself, or by others with his connivance. His alleged conduct either as that of a rich and powerful man in private life, or of a judge and magistrate, such as Job actually was (ch. xxix. 7—17. The conduct here ascribed to him that of the unjust judge in the Parable (Luke xviii. 2—5). The opposite of Job's real conduct (ch. xxi. 12—17; xxxi. 17,18, 21). The offence laid to his charge one of the most aggravated. Neglect of the cause of an injured person a grievous offence on the part of the judge or magistrate; still more so when the cause is that of those who are bereft of their natural defenders and unable to defend themselves. To injure any a sin in the sight of God; an aggravated sin to injure the widow and the fatherless. Widows and fatherless children entitled to pity; still more to justice. Not to assist such, a sin; a still greater one to injure them. The widow and fatherless especially cared for by God (Ps. lxviii. 5).

The same required by Him of others, both under the law (Exod. xxii. 22) and under the Gospel (James. i. 27).

These charges exhibit—(1) The wrong done to Job by his friends; (2) The trial thus endured by himself. The open expression of what had been their secret thoughts from the first of their visit (ch. xxi. 27). False charges both a grievous wrong against men and a heinous sin against God. An aggravation when, as in this case, laid against a good man and a friend.

The multiplicity and magnitude of Job's offences only inferred by Eliphaz from his extraordinary sufferings. His false and uncharitable charges the result of a false philosophy and mistaken views of the Divine government. Errors in religion no less condemnable in themselves or injurious in their consequences from being sincerely held and earnestly defended. Christ's followers often put to cruel deaths under the impression of doing God service (John xvi. 2). No new thing for God's faithful servants to have things laid to their charge, of which they not only are innocent, but which they utterly abhor. Innocence itself no security against false and abominable charges. Christ put to death under a charge of blasphemy. Stigmatized as a drunkard and a glutton, a deceiver of the people and exciter of sedition.

III. Imputes Job's calamities directly to his sins (verse 9). "Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; or darkness that thou canst not see [any way of escape] and abundance of waters (—overwhelming troubles) cover thee." Refers—(1) To his sudden and multiplied calamities; (2) To his inward darkness and distress; (3) To his perplexity and confusion of mind, both as to the cause of his troubles and any way of escape out of them. Fear and consternation the natural result of great, unlooked for, and successive calamities. Job's present experience. His case an apparent contravention of the promise: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings (Ps. cxii. 7). Calmness and fearlessness in reference to calamity and trouble the believer's duty and privilege (Phil. iv. 67). Christ in the midst of the storm: "It is I, be not afraid." —Job's great troubles, according to Eliphaz, due to great sins. No sins likely to be more severely visited than those falsely charged upon him—unmercifulness to and oppression of the poor and needy. He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy (James ii. 13). No louder cry than that of wrong done to the widow, the fatherless, and the poor (James v. 4).

IV. Charges Job with infidel principles (verses 11—14). "Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold the height of the stars how high they are!" As spoken by Eliphaz himself, expresses the Divine supremacy over all—even the highest created beings—and the ability of God to take full cognizance of the affairs of men. As possibly ascribed by him to Job expressed the supposed distance of God from this lower world, and the consequent unlikelihood of his taking any notice of human affairs. "And ('yet' or 'therefore') thou sayest [in effect, if not in so many words]. How (*Margin*, what) doth God know? Can he judge (—rule in the affairs of men) through the thick cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that He seeth not; and He walketh in the circuit of heaven." The sentiment here falsely ascribed to Job that of a heart blinded by sin and alienated from God,—God too far off and too much occupied with higher things than to care for or take cognizance of human affairs (Ps. x. 11; lxxiii. 11). Finite man thinks of God as finite and imperfect like himself. Perhaps in this case the wish the father to the thought. The fool hath said in his *heart*, "There is no God"—to take cognizance of earthly things (Ps. xiv. 1). God's omnipresence and omniscience little realized because little loved. Hence—(1) Indulgence in a course of sin and oppression such as is here falsely ascribed to Job; (2) Murmuring under trouble and oppression as if God took no heed either of man's doings or sufferings. Even a child of God, under deep and accumulated afflictions, tempted with such unbelieving and God-dishonouring thoughts. Faith in God's omnipresence, omniscience, and all-superintending Providence, our comfort in trouble and our guard in temptation. The worst sentiments often falsely ascribed to the children of God. "Blessed are ye when man shall say all manner of evil against you for my sake" (Matt. v. 11).

The immense height or distance of the stars impressive even to ordinary observers. That distance, however, probably much greater than could be dreamt of in the days of Eliphaz. The nearest fixed star thousands of millions of miles distant. Millions of stars thousands of times more distant still. The Milky Way, "powdered with stars," an immense cluster of stars too distant to be distinguished as such by the naked eye. Stars so distant that their light travelling at the same rate as that of the sun only reaches us so as to render them visible after thousands of years. A false and foolish conclusion that because God is present with and governs those distant worlds or suns, he cannot be supposed to superintend or care for the affairs of this minor planet. God

necessarily equally present in, and equally cognisant of, every part of his boundless dominions. The most distant and the most minute of His creatures equally and at once observed by His eye and supported by His hand. The same omniscience that numbers the stars numbers also the hairs of our head. Divinely enlightened reason sees everywhere

"The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds."

Universal government no burden to an infinite God. An animalcule shares His attention with a sun, a worm with a seraph: God higher than the highest star, yet nearer to both reader and writer than his nearest friend. Hence:—

1. God infinitely glorious and worthy of all adoration. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. xix. 1).

2. Submission to God in all circumstances the creature's duty.

3. Trust in God, under the severest trials, the believer's privilege.

4. Awful infidelity of the heart to ignore God and expel Him from His own world.

5. Dreadful nature of sin that despises and rebels against a God at once so infinitely great and good.

V. Adduces as a warning to Job the example of the antediluvian world (verse 15—20). "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time (or prematurely), whose foundation was overflown with a flood (*Margin*, 'a flood was poured upon their foundations;' or, 'a river poured forth was their foundation,' *i.e.*, their dwelling which seemed most secure, or all they trusted in); which said unto God, Depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for them (or, 'for us,' or 'to us')? Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me (either the protest of Eliphaz himself against the principles and practice of those antediluvian sinners, and others like them, or perhaps the words of Job repeated in irony). The righteous see it (viz., the destruction of the ungodly) and are glad, and the innocent laugh them to scorn (Ps. lii. 6; lviii. 10, 11). Whereas our substance is not cut down (or, 'verily our adversary is destroyed'); but (or 'and') the remnant of them (*Margin*, 'their excellency') the fire devoureth." Possible allusion to the destruction of the cities of the Plain, with a cruel side-glance at Job's own losses and the occasion of one of them. Observe:—

1. Some dealt with by God in judgment for the warning of others (2 Pet. ii. 6).

2. Sin an "old way," older than the world itself, trodden by the angels that fell, and then by the world before the Flood (Gen. vi. 5.)

3. A course of sin sooner or later ends in suffering. Sin, though an old and well-trodden way, as dangerous and disastrous as ever (Rom. vi. 23).

4. The conduct of sinners and its fatal consequences to be carefully "marked" and avoided.

5. The firmest earthly possession easily swept away by the judgments of God: "whose foundation," &c.

6. Dislike of God the essence of sin and the root of a sinful life; "Which said unto God, Depart from us."

7. God and sin unable to dwell together at peace in the same heart.

8. The unrenewed heart unable to get God far enough; the renewed one unable to get Him near enough.

9. The baseness and blindness of sin. Like the man who turns his best friend and benefactor out of doors.

10. The ungodly often the most prosperous in this world. "He filled their houses," &c.

11. The part of the impenitent to despise God's goodness as well as defy His power (Rom. ii. 4).

12. God's multiplied favours a fearful aggravation of a sinful life. "Yet He filled their houses," &c. Sad when a house full of good things is not accompanied with a heart full of grace.

13. A constant protest to be entered against an ungodly life, however prosperous. The "counsel of the wicked," however fair and flattering, to be kept far from us.

14. Prosperous wickedness and suffering piety only for a time. A day cometh when the tables will be turned. "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh; woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke vi. 21—25). Abraham's—"Son, remember" (Luke xvi. 25).

15. The righteous glad, not at the sinner's calamity itself, but at the holiness and justice of God appearing in it. The Creator's character dearer to holy men and angels than the creature's comfort.

16. Proud and presumptuous sinners at at last put to shame (Dan. xii. 2).

17. Happy when we can truly rank ourselves with the godly. "Whereas *our* substance," &c., *i.e.* that of the righteous; or, "Truly *our* adversary," &c. God's saints regard His adversaries as their own.

VI. Exhorts to repentance and piety (verse 21—23).

1. *Exhortation to submission and reconciliation with God* (verse 21). "Acquaint now

thyself (or, 'Submit thyself, and cultivate friendship and fellowship') with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee" (or, "thine increase shall be good"). Precious exhortation, but unjustly addressed to Job, as if still estranged from God. Contains:

First, the *Exhortation proper*. Two parts. Part *First*.

"Acquaint thyself with God."

Acquaintance or friendship with God our first duty and highest interest. Implies—(1) *Knowledge of God*. Knowledge necessary to acquaintanceship. To have friendship with God we must know Him,—as far as He is pleased to reveal Himself, and as far as creatures can know Him, in His nature, His attributes and His relations. God to be known as a Spirit, and as a Unity in Three Persons,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To be known as infinite, eternal, and unchanging; as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent; as holy, just, wise, and good. To be known as our Creator, Preserver, Governor, and through the incarnation, obedience, and death of His Son, our Redeemer. To be known in part from His works, but most from His Word. Only rightly and savingly known through the inward illumination and revelation of His Holy Spirit. To be known as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ (John xiv. 9). Power given to Christ by the Father to communicate the saving knowledge of Himself to men (Matt. xi. 27; John xvii. 2, 3). The Son's mission to reveal the Father (John i. 18). Knowledge of God to be obtained—(i.) Through *attention to and faith in the Word that reveals Him*. The Scriptures testify of Christ; therefore to be searched (John v. 39). (ii.) Through *earnest prayer for Divine illumination and teaching* (Prov. ii. 3—5). Wisdom, including the true knowledge of God, given by God Himself in answer to believing prayer (James i. 4). (iii.) Through *application to and acceptance of Christ as a Saviour*. One part of His work as a Saviour, to teach, enlighten, and communicate the saving knowledge of God (Matt. ii. 27—29; John xvii. 2, 3). Christ Himself made wisdom to those who receive and trust in Him (1 Cor. i. 30).—(2) *Submission to God*. Submission to God the first duty of a creature. Necessary to acquaintance and friendly intercourse with God. God's gracious regard directed to the humble and submissive (Isa. lxvi. 2). Submission the first lesson in the school of Christ, and the first step to the enjoyment of the Divine favour and friendship (Matt. xi. 27—29).—(3) *Reconciliation with God*. Man, through sin, in a state of enmity with God. As a transgressor of His law, is under condemnation. Sin to be forgiven, and man reconciled to God before any enjoyment of acquaintanceship or friendly intercourse. Reconciliation with God the object of the Son's incarnation and vicarious death. Sin a separating element between God and His creatures. The sword of justice between God and the sinner. To be sheathed before any friendly fellowship can exist. Only sheathed when satisfaction has been made to law and justice for transgression. To be first stained with the blood of a substitute. Hence the oblation of sacrifices. Christ the only true Sacrifice and Substitute. Men reconciled to God by His blood (Eph. ii. 13—16; Col. i. 21, 22; Rom. v. 10).—(4) *Conformity to God's will and character*. Agreement in spirit and principles necessary to friendship and fellowship (Amos iii. 3). Conformity to God's will and ways a creature's highest duty and interest. Without it man's spirit a troubled sea that cannot rest.—(5) *Friendly walk and fellowship with God*. The end of all the preceding. The highest happiness of a creature. Our privilege in this life, our blessedness in the next (Rev. iii. 4). The testimony borne to Enoch and Noah before the Flood: they "walked with God." The third duty required of man (Mic. vi. 8). Abraham the friend of God. God's friendship and fellowship man's highest happiness in Paradise (Gen. ii. 8). Lost by the Fall, but restored in Christ (John xiv. 23). The secret of happiness in a suffering world and of contentment in every lot. He cannot be unhappy who has the Almighty for his friend. Observe—(i.) *Our honour to be made capable of acquaintance and fellowship with God*. Heaven, its endless enjoyment; hell, its irrecoverable loss. (ii.) *Ever increasing acquaintance with God, in and through Jesus Christ, our precious privilege.*

Second part of exhortation:

"Be at peace."

Peace the sweetest word in any language. Includes all good. God's best gift. God the God of peace. True peace the "peace of God." Peace on earth the object and result of the Saviour's incarnation (Luke ii. 14). Peace the purchase of His blood. Christ Himself our peace. His title 'the Prince of Peace.' Peace His legacy and gift to His followers. Imparts His own peace (John xiv. 27). Gives it not in word as a mere salutation, but in reality and experience. Peace either external or internal. The former precious; the latter still more so. In this world, the believers enjoy the latter without the former (John xvi. 33). In the next, they enjoy both. Acquaintance with God the only way to peace. The world without peace

because without God. Sometimes an external peace enjoyed without the internal. True peace only to be found in Him who is our peace. No peace without pardon, no pardon without Christ. Peace with God before peace in ourselves. Peace offered by God through the death of His Son. The Gospel an ambassage of peace from the King of kings. God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and now beseeching men to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. v. 19—21). Peace with God the immediate result of crediting the message and accepting the offer (Rom. v. 1). Followed by internal peace (Phil. iv. 6, 7). Preserved by trust in Christ, and obedience as its fruit. Christ trusted in, as our Surety and Substitute, our peace as sinners; Christ followed as our Master and Pattern, our peace as saints.

Second. The *Promise* attached to the exhortation proper: "Thereby good shall come unto thee." Peace with God brings every blessing in its train (Rom. v. 1), &c. No good withheld "from them that walk uprightly," as His reconciled and obedient children (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). All things made to work together for good to them that love God (Rom. viii. 28). Afflictions and trials converted into blessings (Heb. xii. 11). To the submissive and believing, good comes in this life; still more in the life to come. Present good to believers only a foretaste of the future. Suffering with Christ here, glorified with Him hereafter. Death separates them from all evil, and introduces them into all good. Peace on earth crowned with glory in heaven.

2. Exhortation to a *cordial acceptance of and attention to Divine teaching and admonition* (verse 22). "Receive, I pray thee, the law at His mouth, and lay up His words in thine heart." The enjoyment of peace to be followed by a life of purity. Friendship with God inseparable from obedience to Him. Christ's yoke accepted with rest imparted (Matt. xi. 28, 29). The rest continued as the yoke is carried. Mary at peace sits down at the Master's feet and hears His words. God a King as well as a Father and Friend. Christ a Master as well as a Saviour. With Christ, the law given as a directory of conduct, not as a covenant of life. At first given with —"Do this and live;" now given with,— "Live and do this." Our happiness, that the law is to be received at the hands of Him who has Himself fulfilled its commands and endured its curse as our Surety. The same pierced hands that purchased peace for our enjoyment, presents the law for our obedience. The peace of the Gospel preserved by obedience to the law.

The law from God's "mouth,"—spoken and given by Himself. At first given to man at his creation; afterwards on various occasions, and in different ways. God spake to the fathers at sundry times and in divers manners (Heb. i. 1). The "law" here probably equivalent to "His words" in the next clause. The directory not only of our conduct but of our faith. Taken in a general sense as including both law and Gospel, precept and promise. —*God's Law*, not our own will or reason, or the maxims and customs of the world to be the guide of our practice and opinions. —God's law to be "received,"—(1) By reverent attention; (2) Thankful receptance; (3) Cordial faith; (4) Cheerful obedience; (5) Humble submission. To be not merely read but "received." God's law one of His most precious gifts (Hos. viii. 12; Ps. cxlvi. 19, 20). His law, properly so called, as much a gift as his Gospel.

God's "words" to be "laid up in our heart,"—for remembrance, meditation, and use. To be laid up as our most precious treasure. To be laid up, not in our chest or our chamber, but in our heart. To be hidden in the heart that we may not sin (Ps. cxix. 11). So treasured by Christ, and ready for use in the hour of temptation (Ps. xl. 8; Matt. iv. 4). To be laid up in the heart,— (1) By deep attention; (2) Frequent reading or hearing; (3) Serious reflection. Not only to be learned but "laid up." The mark of a loving child to prize, ponder, and preserve the words of an absent parent. God's words laid up *for* us in the Scripture, and to be laid up *by* us in our heart. Worthy to be so laid up as our choicest treasure (Ps. xix. 10). God's words both words of promise and precept, wooing, and warning. Given both for direction and comfort. Found both in the Old and New Testaments.

VII. Holds forth various promises with conditions (verse 23—30).

"If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up (more especially in a family, with a new and numerous race of children); thou shalt (rather, 'if thou shalt') put away iniquity (or wrong doing) far from thy tabernacles (plural,—Job addressed as a chief or emir); then shalt thou lay up gold as the dust (or, as *Margin*, 'and lay the precious metals on the dust,' as things of no value and only to be trodden on), and the gold of Ophir (a place in Arabia distinguished for its gold) as (or 'on') the stones of the brooks; then shall the Almighty be thy defence (*Margin*, 'thy gold'), and thou shalt have plenty of silver (or, 'and [he shall be] treasures of silver unto thee'). For (or 'yea,'—a still greater blessing) thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him (as incense),

and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt perform thy vows [on thy prayer being answered]. Thou shalt also decree (or purpose) a thing and it shall be established unto thee, and the light [of prosperity and the Divine blessing] shall shine upon thy ways. When men are cast down (or 'shall cast [thee] down'; or, 'shall humble themselves'), then thou shalt say [in confident assurance], there is (or 'shall be') lifting up; and he shall save the humble person. He (*i.e.* God) shall deliver the island (or 'the country' or 'dwelling') of the innocent (or, 'He shall deliver him that is not innocent', viz., at thy intercession), and it is delivered (or, 'he shall be delivered') by the pureness of thy hands." Three conditions—

1. *Returning to God.* "If thou return to the Almighty,—return home to Him as a prodigal to his father, so as again to be united to him and to the family,—return to Him in submission, obedience and love. Job unjustly regarded as having forsaken God and cast off his fear (ch. xv. 4.) Always true that the first step to a sinner's happiness is returning to God: "I will arise and go to my Father." All we like sheep have gone astray. God's constant call to the unconverted: Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die? "*To* the Almighty." "*To*" emphatic, even or quite to Him; not only in good inclinations and beginnings, but fully and thoroughly. "He arose and went to His Father." Not enough to *turn from sin*, but to *return to God* (Jer. iv. 1; Hos. vii. 16). Christ the way back to the Father (John xiv. 6). Returning to God a necessary condition of God returning to us (Mal. iii. 7). Important prayer (Jer. xxxi. 18).

2. *Putting iniquity far from us and from our dwelling.* "Thou shalt put iniquity far from thy tabernacles." No true returning to God without turning from sin. God and sin at opposite poles; the face to the one, the back to the other. No friendship with God without a falling out with sin. Sin the abominable thing which God hates (Jer. xliv. 4).—To be put away not only from ourselves but from our *dwelling*. A man responsible for what is done in his house. David's resolution (Ps. ci. 3—7). Joshua's (Josh. xxiv. 15). Much of a man's sin committed in his own house. A man to purify his house as well as his heart. Job's piety seen in his care about his children's conduct as well as his own (ch. i. 6).—Iniquity not only to be put away but *far* away (ch. xxi. 16).—Sin represented here as "*iniquity*." Sin many-sided. Here especially its relation to our neighbour. Injustice, oppression, wrong, retention of dishonest gain, inconsistent with the enjoyment of the Divine favour and blessing.

3. *Ceasing to love and trust in riches.* "Lay gold on the dust," (*Margin*). The heart to be withdrawn from covetousness. Love to the world incompatible with love to God. Trust in riches, heart idolatry. No man able to serve two masters. God not to be served with a divided heart (Hos. x. 2). Trust in riches the worship of Mammon. Solemnly repudiated by Job (ch. xxxi. 24, 25).

Promises.

1. *Upbuilding* (verse 23). "Thou shalt built up." God, who pulls down, able also to build up. Allusion to Job's calamities, both as to fortune and family. Building up both external and internal. Here probably rather the former; temporal prosperity, and more especially in relation to offspring. Upbuilding in spiritual blessing, and soul-prosperity the New Testament promise (Acts ix. 31). Implies growth in grace, comfort, spiritual strength. Upbuilding in Christ (Col. ii. 7); in faith (Jude 20); in love (Eph. iv. 16). Spiritual growth dependent on consistent walk (Is. lviii. 9—12).

2. *Enjoyment of God as our portion and defence* (verse 25). "The Almighty shall be thy defence" (or treasure). The believer's place of defence is the munition of rocks. Underneath are the everlasting arms. God Himself the portion of His people (Deut. xxii. 9; Ps. xvi. 5). He is safe who has the Almighty for his defence, and rich who has God for his treasure.

> "Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor;
> And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

3. *Delight in God* (verse 26). "Thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty." God the fountain of joy and ocean of delights. more than enough in Him to fill all hearts with pleasure. God a sun to gladden, while a shield to guard. Giving up the unsatisfying short-lived pleasures of sin, we receive those which are perfect and enduring. Only a penitennt and renewed heart capable of delighting in the Almighty. The pure in heart see God (Matt. v. 8).

4. *Access to, and confidence in, God as a reconciled Father* (verse 26). "Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God." Implies conscious acceptance, delight, and confidence. The experience of one conscious of forgiveness and acceptance "in the Beloved." The face "lifted up" in prayer and communion with God. The spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. Boldness of access to a father the privilege of a child. The believer's privilege in relation to God (Eph. iii. 12). Enjoyed in Christ. Boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of

Jesus (Heb. x. 19). Believers to come boldly to the throne of grace, having Jesus there as their High Priest (Heb. iv. 16). Confidence towards God connected with consciousness of obeying Him (1 John iii. 21, 22). Abiding in Christ now gives confidence before Him at His appearing hereafter (1 John ii. 28). A loving heart gives boldness in the day of judgment (1 John iv. 18).

5. *The spirit of prayer and acceptance of our petitions* (verse 27). "Thou shalt make thy prayer to him, and he shall hear thee." Ability to pray, and to pray with acceptance, the gift of God. Children, not slaves, free to bring their requests to the master. The spirit of prayer connected with a state of acceptance. Answers to prayer given to believers along with the spirit of prayer (1 John v. 14—16). Answers to prayer the privilege of the upright (Ps. lxvi. 18; xv. 8). The Lord fulfils the desire of them that fear Him (Ps. cxlv. 6). Prayer as incense, from the Saviour's merits and the Spirit's grace (Ps. cxli. 2; Rev. viii. 3, 4). Answered for the sake of the Elder Brother (John xvi. 23). God never weary of blessing His people, because never weary of loving His Son. Universal promise made to prayer offered believingly in the Saviour's name (John xv, 7; 1 John v. 15; Mark xi. 24).

6. *The grace of thanksgiving with answers to prayer* (verse 27). "And thou shalt perform thy vows." Grace to render thanks for mercies received no less a mercy than the mercies themselves. Thanksgiving both our duty and our privilege. When God graciously fulfils our prayers we ought faithfully to fulfil our vows. Thanksgiving for answers to prayer and performance of vows practised by the heathen themselves (Jonah i. 16).

7. *Success in undertakings* (verse 28). "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways." Prosperity and success in our undertakings dependent upon God (Rom i. 8). Promised to the confiding and consistent believer (2 Chron. xx. 20; Ps. i. 3; xxxvii. 5). Promised to Joshua (Josh i. 8). Afforded to Joseph (Gen. xxxix. 3, 23); and to Daniel (Dan. vi. 28). The prayer of Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 12); and of Nehemiah (Neh. i. 11).

8. *Comfort, hope, and deliverance in time of trouble and depression* (verse 29). "When men are cast down (or, 'when they shall cast thee down,' or, 'when thou art depressed') then thou shalt say [to thyself, or to others], there is (or, 'shall be') lifting up; and he shall save the humble person." Comfort and confidence of help and deliverance in time of common as well as personal danger and depression, with encouragement to others. Realized by Paul in the ship (Acts xxvii. 21—25. The Lord a light to His people in time of darkness (Micah vii. 8). Confidence, joy, and hope, in seasons of trouble and adversity, the fruit of faith and obedience (Hab. iii. 17—19). Job's own experience at times (ch. xxiii. 10).

8. *Usefulness to others* (verse 30). "He shall deliver the island (country or dwelling) of the innocent (or, "shall deliver Him that is not innocent, *i.e.*, that is guilty); and it (or he) is delivered by the pureness of thy hands." God honours His faithful and confiding people by not only blessing themselves, but making them blessings to others So Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Paul. Not only makes them grow themselves, but brings others to sit under their shadow (Hosea xiv. 6, 7). Saves them, and gives them to share with Himself the joy of saving others (James v. 23; Jude 23; 1 Tim. iv. 16). The accepted and faithful believer's prayers made efficacious even for the ungoldly (1 John v. 16). So Abraham's would have been in the care of Sodom (Gen. xviii. 24). A community, company, or family, often saved for the sake of the godly in it (Acts xxvii. 24). Pureness of hands, both in practice and prayer, necessary to real usefulness to others. The promises in the text realized in Job's case in a way not anticipated by Eliphaz (ch. xlii. 7—9). A praying man a public good.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOB'S THIRD REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

Ceases directly to address his friends. His present speech rather a soliloquy. Takes no notice of the charges laid against him by Eliphaz. Laments the want of access to God in order to plead his cause before Him. Expresses his consciousness of integrity and obedience to the Divine will, as well as his solemn awe at the absolute sovereignity of God, and the mysterious character of His dealings with him.

I. Complains of the continuance of his troubles and the view still taken of his conduct under it (verse 2). "Even to-day [after all I have already suffered] is my complaint bitter (or, 'even to-day [after

all I have asserted of my innocence] is my speech [regarded as] rebellion'); my stroke is heavier than my groaning" (or, is [viewed as] heavy on account of my groaning). Expresses either his own sorrowful experience, or the views of his friends regarding it. His troubles now of some weeks, or perhaps months, continuance. No relief as yet either to his mental distress or physical disease. Observe—

1. *Protracted trouble worst to endure.* The spirit worn out and exhausted by continued suffering. David's complaint—"Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Ps. iii. 24). The misery of the lost that time brings no change. Eternity the only lane that has no turning. As the tree falls, so it lies.

2. An aggravation of trouble when complaint is construed into rebellion. Job's complaint perhaps not always entirely free from it. His spirit not always what it was in ch. i. and ii. To complain under such sufferings only human. Bitterness of complaint not always rebelliousness of spirit. Bitter complaint consistent with meekness and submission. A bitter cry heard on the cross from the lips of the only spotless sufferer (Matt. xxvii. 46). Job alone conscious of the depth of his distress. The heart knoweth its own bitterness.

3. Grace forbids not to groan under trouble, but puts a bridle upon the lips. Job's groanings frequent but restrained. He is a conqueror, not who never groans under protracted trouble, but who holds out patiently to the end. Terrible conflict sometimes to be maintained—(1) Against suffering; (2) Against sin; (3) Against suffering and sinning at the same time.

II. Longs for free access to God (verse 3). "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. I would order my cause before him, I would fill my mouth with arguments [in proving myself an innocent sufferer]; I would know [without fear of the result] the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me" [in answer to my arguments, and in reference to my character and the cause of my suffering]. Perhaps his answer to the exhortation of Eliphaz (ch. xxii. 21). God so familiar to Job's thoughts as to be spoken of without being named. His life, like Enoch's, a walking with God. Observe—

1. *No uncommon thing for one who walks with God to be at times without free access to Him.* God, for wise purposes, hides Himself at times even from His own (Jer. xiv. 8). No finding God but as He reveals Himself. Want of access in time of trouble a special trial of faith and patience.

2. *Access to God the privilege of believers.* A time for finding God (Ps. xxxii. 6; Is. lv. 6). The contrary implied (Prov. i. 24—29). God found nowhere but in Christ. Christ the way to the Father (John xiv. 6). Free access to God for sinners through Him and His shed blood (Heb. iv. 15, 16; x. 19—22. The Holy Spirit given to believers in order to their free access and approach to God through Christ (Eph. ii. 18). The spirit of grace and of supplication (Zech. x. 12); of adoption, crying: Abba Father (Gal. iv. 6). Helps infirmities of the saints, making inward intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. viii. 26).

3. *God not always found immediately* (Prov. viii. 34, 35; Luke xviii. 17). Yet always found where there is earnestness, humility, and faith in seeking Him (Is. xlv. 9; Jer. xxix. 13). In the time of Job, the way to God through Christ still comparatively obscure, and the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of supplication and adoption, still comparatively withheld. God found the sooner the more we are humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness. Job's desire still rather to have access to God as a righteous man, in order to have his innocence affirmed, than as a sinner to have his sins forgiven. God reveals Himself to the humble and contrite, not the self-righteous (Is. lxvi. 2; Luke xviii. 10—14).

Job still persuaded of God's favourable regard (verse 6). "Will he plead against me (overawe me or put me down) with his great power [as unable to prevail by words]? No, but he would put strength in me" (enabling me to plead my cause successfully; or, "he would give heed to me," affording a gracious and impartial hearing to my case). God the opposite of the Unjust Judge in the Parable. Not only hearkens to our pleading but gives strength to plead. So the Divine angel wrestling with Jacob at Penuel (Gen. xxxii. 24—30).

His confidence as to the result (verse 7). "There (in such a case—on being admitted to His tribunal) the righteous might dispute with him (the innocent man—referring to himself—might freely plead his cause); so should I be delivered for ever (come off victorious) from my judge." (1) *God's throne at once one of justice and grace.* (2) *The comfort of true and tried believers that they shall obtain a favourable verdict from God.* Believers have—(i.) The testimony of a good conscience; (ii.) The consciousness of a personal interest in Christ as their Surety and Advocate with the Father (1 John iii. 21; ii. 1). The believer not absolutely righteous in himself, but in Christ the Righteous One his Head and Representative (Rom. v. 14; 2 Cor. v. 21). The confidence of Mes-

siah, as God's righteous servant transferred to His believing members (Is. l. 5—9; Rom. viii. 32—34). (3) *A small matter that man condemns if God approves* (1 Cor. iv. 3).

III. Laments his inability to find God as he desired (verse 8). "Behold, I go forward (or, 'to the east') but he is not there; and backward (or, 'to the west'), but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand (or, on the north) where he doth work (the north being the more populous part of the world, the region of stars and constellations and the birthplace of storms and tempests), but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand (or, on the south, where all is solitude and waste), but I cannot see him." Observe—

1. *A believer, while in darkness and trouble, makes continual attempts to find God* (Song iii. 2). Nothing satisfies a living soul but God Himself (Ps. lxiii. 1, 2).

2. *God found anywhere with humility, earnestness, and faith; without them, nowhere.* Found neither in solitude nor society unless He graciously reveals Himself in Christ through the Spirit. God's absolute presence everywhere; His gracious manifested presence only as He is pleased to afford it. The latter promised to faithful believers (John xiv. 21—23). God's dealings with men in Providence with a view to their seeking Him, feeling after Him, and finding Him (Acts xvii. 26, 27).

3. *God often graciously near us when we are without sense or consciousness of His presence.* Job's case now like that of Hagar in the Wilderness (Gen. xvi. 13; xxi. 19).

4. *Prayer answered at the best time and in the best way.* Job's desire ultimately granted after Elihu's speech had prepard him for it. Then no longer has a case to plead, but conscious of personal unworthiness and the Divine perfection, is able to leave it entirely in the Lord's hands. Our own spirit generally the greatest hindrance to our prayers being answered.

5. *God's manifested and enjoyed presence the greatest happiness.* Happy when everything in nature, sunrise and sunset, storm and calm, "prompts with remembrance of a present God."

> "His presence who made all so fair, perceived,
> Makes all still fairer."

IV. Comforts himself with the thought of the Divine omniscience and the assurance of ultimate triumph (verse 10). "But he knoweth the way that I take (*Margin*: 'that is with me,'—all my experience and conduct in this affliction, as well as all my previous course of life); when he hath tried me [sufficiently by these troubles; or, simply, 'he hath tried me, viz., by these present sufferings], I shall come forth, out of this furnace of affliction, or out of this probation to which I am now subjected] as gold" [comes out of the fire that tries and purifies it, refined from the dross of remaining corruption, and freed from all charges and suspicions as to my character and conduct]. Observe—

1. *The mark of an upright believer to rejoice that God is acquainted with all his ways.*

2. *A believer's comfort under affliction and reproach, to know that God is perfectly acquainted both with his character and experience.* If in trouble we cannot see God, it should be our comfort that God sees us, and knows all about us. Hagar's happy discovery in the wilderness: "Thou God seest me" (Gen. xvi. 13).

3. *Our great comfort, when reproached by men, to know that our conduct is approved by God.* Our main concern, therefore, ought to be to obtain that approval. "Let them curse, but bless Thou" (Ps. cxix. 28).

4. *God tries and proves all his children* (Ps. xi. 5; Jer. xx. 12). The desire of a sound believer to be tried by God (Ps. xvii. 3; xxvi. 2; cxxxix. 23). A believer's trials and afflictions often only the divinely intended means of proving his principles and faith (1 Pet. i. 7; James i. 12; Deut. viii. 2).

5. *The result of a true believer's trials certain.* This result threefold: (1) The justification of his faith; (2) The confirmation of his hope; (3) The purification of his love (Rom. v. 4, &c.; Is. xxvii. 9; Heb xii. 10, 11; Dan. xii. 10).

6. *Genuine believers like gold.* (1) Precious (Lam. iv. 2; Is. xliii. 4); (2) Rare (Matt. vii. 14; Luke xii. 32); (3) Usually found mixed with earth and dross (Is. i. 25); (4) Subjected to the fire of purification (Zech. xiii. 9); 1 Pet. i. 7; (5) Able to endure the fire (1 Cor. iii. 12; (6) Ultimately made perfectly pure (Is. i. 25).

V. Declares the ground of his assurance (verse 11, 12). That ground the consciousness of his character and (1 John iii. 21). Job conscious of—

1. *Persevering obedience to God's will* (verse 11). "My foot hath held his steps (followed faithfully and perseveringly the steps he prescribed to me, and which were pleasing in his sight); his ways have I kept, and not declined: neither have I gone back from the commandments of his lips." God's steps not only prescribed by Him, but trodden by Himself. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful" (Eph. v. 1; 1 Pet. i. 16

Luke vi. 36). Especially trodden by God manifest in the flesh (John xiii. 15; Eph. v. 2; Phil. ii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6). Those steps marked in the Scriptures (1 Thess. iv. 2). Observe—(1) *The proof of sincerity not merely to put our feet in God's steps, but to keep them there;* not only to enter upon God's way, but not to decline or turn aside from it. (2) *God's way to be kept, not our own*; (3) *Many temptations to decline from God's way.* These are—(i.) From the world; (ii.) From our own heart. Sometimes the frowns of the world, sometimes its smiles, prove temptations. Hence Agur's prayer (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). (4) *Possible for a man to keep God's way, and not decline from it.* True generally, though not absolutely. "Not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves" (Prov. vii. 20; 1 John i. 8). In a general sense, possible with Paul to live in all good conscience before God (Acts xxiii. 1). So David, as typical of Christ (Ps. xviii. 21—23); Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 6; xx. 3); Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 2; xxiii. 25); the writer of Psalm cxix. (Daniel?) (Ps. cxix. 22, 31, 51, 55, 56). God's Word given and to be attended to for this purpose (Josh. i. 7, 8; Ps. cxix. 11). Requires—(i.) Reflection (Prov. iv. 26; Ps. cxix. 59; (ii.) Resolution (Ps. cxix. 106); (iii.) Courage; (iv.) Watchfulness; (v.) Dependence on Divine strength; (vi.) Prayer. (5) *Job in the Old, an example to believers in the New Testament dispensation.* Much more light and grace vouchsafed in the latter than in the former. The Gospel dispensation especially the dispensation of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 8—11). Hence a still higher and holier life to be expected. Believers to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18).

2. *High esteem for the words of God* (verse 12). "I have esteemed (*Hebrew*: 'hidden, or treasured up') the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (*Margin*: "My appointed portion;" or, "than my own purpose," when these have come in collision). Words from God's mouth known in all ages. God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past to the fathers (Heb. i. 1). The words of God's mouth treasured up in the Scriptures of truth (Deut. xxxi. 19, 22, 24; Is. xxx. 8; Hab. ii. 2). Spoken and preserved as the rule of faith and practice. To be—(1) Highly esteemed as our most precious treasure; (2) Chosen and adopted as the only rule of our faith and practice; (3) Carefully treasured up in memory and heart; (4) Held fast and persevered in.

Reasons for highly esteeming God's Word. (1) Its *source*,—God Himself; (2) Its *nature and character*—(i.) Pure; (ii.) True; (iii.) Efficacious. (3) Its *tendency* and *end*. The Word of God is—(i.) A means of convincing of sin and error (Ps. xix. 11; Heb. iv. 12); (ii.) A means of conversion (Ps. xix. 7); (iii.) The Holy Spirit's instrument in regeneration (James i. 18); 1 Pet. i. 23); (iv.) Means of spiritual enlightenment (Ps. xix. 8; cxix. 130); (v.) Directory as to duty and the way of salvation (2 Tim. iii. 16; John v. 39); (vi.) Means of spiritual comfort, refreshment, and delight (Ps. cxix. 50, 54, 111; xix. 8, 10; Jer. xv. 16; (vii.) Means of sanctification (John xv. 3; xvii. 17; 2 Cor. iii. 18); (viii.) Means of spiritual fruitfulness (John xv. 7, 8); (ix.) Means of perfecting Christian character (2 Tim. iii. 17); (x.) Means of preparing for usefulness (2 Tim. iii. 17).

Evidences of highly esteeming God's Word—(i.) When it is attentively read or heard (Prov. viii. 34; John v. 39; (ii.) When seriously and frequently pondered (Luke ii. 19); (iii.) When carefully treasured up in the memory (Ps. cxix. 11); (iv.) When preferred to earthly comforts, possessions, liberty, even life itself; (v.) When our own views, purposes, and practices are given up because in opposition to its teachings; (vi.) When suffering and loss are preferred to the violation of its precepts.

Examples of such esteem: David (Ps. xix. 10; cxix. 97); Jeremiah (xv. 16); Daniel (Dan. vi. 5, 10); Mary (Luke x. 39—42). "I had rather be without meat, drink, light, everything than Matt xi. 28."—*Selnecc*er. "I would not for all the world that John xvii. 24 had been left out of the Bible."—*Baxter*. "My soul hath found inexpressibly more sweetness and satisfaction in a single line of the Bible, than in all the pleasures found in the things of the world, since the creation, could equal."—*John Brown of Haddington*. "I would not live in Paradise *without* the Word, and could live in hell *with* it.—*Luther*.

God's Word to be esteemed more than our "necessary food," His Word the food of the soul, and necessary unto health and vigour (1 Pet. ii. 2). The spiritual part of our nature of greater consequence than the material. Man's life not sustained by bread alone, but by every word of God (Matt. v. 4; Deut. viii. 3). God's favour better than life. Spiritual refreshment sweeter and more valuable than corporeal. Better for the soul to be satisfied from God's Word than for the body to be satisfied from the best spread table. "The flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63). Man's soul can no more dispense with spiritual than the body with material food. A famine of the

Word of God a much greater calamity than a famine of bread (Am. viii. 11).

VI. Recals with awe the unchangeableness and absolute sovereignty of God (verse 13). "But he is of one mind (or, 'truly He is one,' the only Supreme Ruler and Potentate; or, 'He is one and the same' [in purpose], *i.e.* unchangeable; or, when he is [set] on any one [object or purpose]) who can turn Him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. And he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things (either such sovereign and mysterious purposes and proceedings in relation to His creatures, or such severe dealings in relation to Job himself), are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His presence [in my thoughts, or at His dealings with me]; when I consider [His majesty, power, and sovereignty], I am afraid of Him" Observe—

1. *God the only Potentate or supreme Ruler of the universe* (1 Tim. vi. 15). Rules and works according to His will. None able to influence, restrain, check, or counteract His procedure.

2. *God unchangeable in His purposes.* Ever like Himself. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Free from the inconstancy and varibleness adhering to creatures. The Father of lights, without variableness or shadow of turning (James i. 17). Is of one mind, character, and purpose. Hence our safety and comfort. "I am the Lord; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). God neither fickle in Himself, nor capable of being influenced by persons or events so as to change His purpose. The history of the universe eternally planned and mapped out by His infinite mind, in full harmony with the freedom of the creature's will and the operation of second causes, which are included in it. Eternity, with all its actualities and possibilities, every moment open to His all-seeing view. His being one eternal NOW. Unnecessary and impossible for a Being, omniscient and omnipotent, all-holy, all wise, and all-good, to change His purpose. Such change at any time only apparent. Ascribed to Him in condescension to our capacity. A change in His external procedure no change in His eternal plan.

3. *God irresistible in His purposes.* "I will work, and who shall let it" (Is. xliii. 13). God as irresistible in His power as He is immutable in His purpose. Nothing too hard for the Lord. For creatures to resist His will is for thorns and briars to oppose a consuming fire. God as able to execute, as He is wise to construct, His plan. The creature's safety, happiness, and success, in falling in with the Creator's will.

6. *God's purposes extend to all His creatures.* No creature so insignificant but has his lot "appointed" for him. Nothing in the universe left to chance. The fall of a sparrow under His goverance as truly as the wreck of a world. Nothing either too minute or too vast for an infinite mind to direct or an almighty hand to control. Creatures and events linked with each other in His purpose throughout the universe, the chain extending from one eternity to another. The combination of a thousand events necessary to raise Joseph to his designed elevation, in order, among many other things, "to save much people alive" (Gen. l. 20).

5. *God's Being, Purposes, and Providence such as to beget deep reverential awe.* Too deep and mysterious for man's faculties to fathom or comprehend. The constant nearness of such a Being to us, our intimate relation to, and absolute dependence upon, Him, overwhelming. Our comfort that He is at once infinitely wise and holy, and just and good. The interests of all His creatures safe in His hands. Only disobedience and rebellion can interfere with the creature's happiness. God revealed in the Gospel in the most amiable possible light as love itself, and as giving the most unequivocal evidence of His character as such, in assuming our nature, obeying His own law, and enduring the utmost penalty of our disobedience, in order to our eternal redemption (1 John iii. 16; iv. 8—10).

6. *Fear the natural effect of thoughts of God viewed apart from Christ and His work of redemption.* Man inwardly and secretly conscious of sin and alienation from God Fear, Peter's first feeling on the apprehension of Christ's Divine character, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8).

VII. Returns to his own particular case (verse 16). "For God maketh my heart soft [with fear and dismay (Josh. ii. 11)], and the Almighty troubleth (or 'confoundeth') me [by His mysterious and apparently cruel procedure]: because I was not cut off [by death] before the darkness [of these calamities came], neither hath he covered the darkness (*Heb.* 'thick darkness' of such accumulated trouble) from my eyes" [by hiding me in the tomb]. Observe—

1. *God able by His providence to make the stoutest heart soft with fear.* Able also by His grace to make the hardest heart soft with penitence and love. Often makes the softness of fear from the iron rod of the law a precursor and preparative to the soft-

ness of love from the golden sceptre of the Gospel.

2. *God able to trouble and confound the wisest and most daring by His mysterious and righteous dealings* (Exod. xiv. 24; viii. 19).

3 *God's dealings with ourselves often such as we are unable to comprehend.*

4. *A mystery that a benevolent and Almighty Being brings men into the world who are destined to suffer. But*—(1) No suffering which is not in some way the consequence of sinning. (2) All things made by God for Himself and for His own glory. In a way unknown to us, every creature made to contribute to the end of its creation. Perhaps God's highest glory hereafter from those who suffer most here. God's grace often greatly glorified by patient suffering even in this life. A patient, submissive, and thankful sufferer here probably one of the brightest jewels in the cabinet of God hereafter. (3) Suffering the appointed path to glory (Acts xiv. 22; Rom. viii. 17). Probably the greatest sufferer in time the loudest singer in eternity. The crown of thorns preparatory to the crown of glory. As with the Head, so with the members (Luke xxiv. 26; Rom. viii. 17). (4) The sufferings of one made to contribute to the benefit of another. Paul's testimony in reference to himself, applicable to believers in general (Col. i. 24). The members thus made to share with the Head. Probably the happiness, moral excellence, and mutual love of redeemed men greatly increased by such a Divine arrangement. (5) The wisdom and the love of God in bringing Job into the world where he had so much to suffer, long ago made manifest both to himself and others.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONTINUATION OF JOB'S REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

Prosecutes his own view of the Divine government. Enlarges on the crimes of one part of men and the sufferings of another as the consequences of them, to shew that judgment is not executed on the ungodly in this world, and that men often suffer without anything in their own conduct to deserve it. The ungodly, however, not left unpunished; and their prosperity and power only for a time.

I. Proposes a question for solution in reference to the Divine government (verse 1). "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?" Or, "Why are not [stated] times [of judgment] laid up (or kept) by the Almighty, and [why do] they that know Him not see His days" [of inflicting punishment on the ungodly?] The question takes the fact for granted and asks the reason of it. The fact supposed—

1. That *stated times of judgment, or Divine court-days, for trying men's actions are manifestly not held.* Men not brought before a Divine tribunal in this life. The great assizes yet to come. Such a day appointed (Acts xvii. 31; x. 42; Rom. ii. 16; xiv. 10; Rev. xx. 12). Men only registered now for judgment and public trial on that day. Sins in this life apparently winked at by God (Ps. l. 21). Sentence against an evil work not speedily executed. The fact sometimes staggering to the godly, especially in earlier times. Remains as a trial for faith and patience. Abused by the ungodly to impenitence and licentiousness.

2. *Times for the visible infliction of punishment on the wicked not seen by the godly in this life.* For the most part sin suffered by God to pass with impunity as to this world. The fact noted by Job (ch. xxi 7); by Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 5); by David (Ps. l. 21); by Solomon (Ecc. viii. 11); by Jeremiah (Jer. xii. 1); by Habakkuk, (Hab. i. 15, 16). Visible judgments rare. Such examples—the deluge; destruction of Sodom, &c.; Herod's death (Acts xii. 23). According to the views of Eliphaz and his two friends, such cases should have been of frequent occurrence.

From the text observe—

1. *Times, in the sense of events, not hidden from the Almighty.* All actions, bad and good, naked and open before Him. Sin, though not *punished*, not the less *perceived.* "Thou God seest me," a truth both for the godly and the ungodly.

2. *Times for the accomplishment of future events not hidden from God.* The future as truly as the present under His perfect inspection. The times and seasons reserved in His own power (Acts i. 15). Though unknown to us, not the less certain to Him (Acts xv. 18.)

3. *Sufficient to describe the godly as "those that know God."* Such knowledge one of—(1) Certainty (1 John iv. 16); (2) Divine communication (John xvii. 2, 3); (Matt. xi. 27); (3) Experience (1 Pet. ii. 3); (4) Regard and love, as Ps. i. 6; (5) Acquaintance and fellowship (Job xxii. 21; Gen. v., 24, vi. 9). As the result of such knowledge the righteous trust in God as a Father (Ps.

ix. 10). Not to know God the characteristic of the ungodly (1 Thess. iv. 5; 2 Thess. i. 8). Godly men the friends of God. Abraham's title of nobility shared by each of them. (Compare James ii. 3; Is. xli. 8, with Luke xii. 4; John xv. 14, 15).

4. *God's friends made acquainted with His purposes and procedure in the world* (Gen. xvii. 17; Ps. xxv. 4; Am. iii. 7; John xv. 15). The characteristic of the ungodly, that they "regard not the works of the Lord nor consider the operation of His hands" (Ps. xxviii. 5; Is. v. 12). Wisdom given to the children of God to discern and know the times (Luke xii. 56; 1 Thess. v. 1—4; Rom. xiii. 11). Times and seasons, however, while still future, reserved in the Lord's own knowledge, except in so far as He is pleased to communicate them (Acts i. 7; Matt. xxiv. 36; Rev. i. 1).

II. Describes the conduct of various classes of men in relation to their fellows, with its consequences (verses 2—8).

First: Their *conduct* (verses 2—4).

1. *Fraud, theft,* and *violence* (verse 2). Exhibited in—

(1.) *Removing "landmarks."* Placing farther back the stones erected to distinguish their own fields from their neighbour's,—common in Eastern and other countries where hedges are not frequent; and doing this for the purposes of fraudulently enlarging their own estate at the expense of their neighbour's. Expressly forbidden in the law of Moses (Deut. xix. 14). Persons guilty of it pronounced accursed (Deut. xxvii. 14). Found in the days of Hosea (Hos. v. 10).

(2.) *Stealing sheep and feeding them as if their own* (verse 2). "They violently take away (or steal) flocks and feed thereof (*margin,* 'feed them')." Job's own experience in reference to his oxen, asses, and camels (ch. i. 14, 15, 17). Pasturing the stolen sheep an aggravation of the crime. Indicated boldness and perseverance in sin. The practice common among the Bedouins. Marks an uncivilized state of society. Practised even in Scotland in the last century in regard to larger cattle. Observe—(i.) The character of sin to sear and deaden the conscience; (ii.) The ungodly often apparently permitted to enjoy the fruit of their sin.

2. *Cruelty and hardheartedness* (verse 3).

(1.) In reference to the *fatherless.* "They drive away the ass of the fatherless" (in order to appropriate it to themselves, probably on some pretended claim, perhaps, as in the next clause, as a pledge or pawn for some loan or debt). The one ass of the fatherless his means of subsistence. The fatherless not only poor, but without any to defend them from such oppression. An ass still the means of subsistence to fatherless and poor children in the East, being used both for riding and carrying burdens.

(2) In reference to the *widow.* "Take the widow's ox for a pledge,"—taking it in pawn for the loan of a trifling sum, and keeping it in their possession. An aggravated cruelty, the ox being the only means of her subsistence by ploughing her little plot of ground and yielding her milk. The widow herself an object of sympathy, her poverty having necessitated her to ask a loan or incur a debt with her hard-hearted neighbour. The sin expressly forbidden by the law (Ex. xxii. 26, 27; Deut. xxiv. 6, 10. "No flesh in man's obdurate heart."

3. *Insolence and oppression of the poor* (verse 4). "They turn the needy out of the way,"—acting towards them with overbearing violence; compelling them by their cruelty and oppression to abandon the highways and frequented parts of the country, and thus preventing them from following their ordinary pursuits; perhaps removing them in order to take possession of their little fields; or forbidding them the highway for their ox or their ass. The "clearances" of modern times. A sin not to aid the poor; still more to expel them from the neighbourhood as burdens and nuisances. The poor never to cease out of the land (Deut. xv. 11). Left as objects for the exercise of kindness and benevolence (Matt. xxvi. 11. To oppress the poor is to reproach their Maker.

Second: The *consequence* of this oppression (verse 4). "The poor of the earth (or land) hide themselves together;" disappearing as unable to endure the oppression or resist their oppressors. "When the wicked rise [in power], men hide themselves" (Prov. xxviii. 20). Forced by oppression into solitudes where they congregate and enjoy comparative safety. The godly under persecution thus often made to wander in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Heb. xi. 38). The case of Elijah and other servants of God in the days of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xvii., 3, xviii. 13). The pilgrim fathers of England and the Huguenots of France. Bedouins and others in the East often obliged to seek refuge in the desert from the oppressions of tyrannical governors. Their life in such circumstances made one of privation and suffering (verse 5). "Behold, as wild asses in the desert [instead of their own fields as formerly], go they forth to their work, rising betimes [before the excessive heat] for a prey (or to obtain food); the wilderness yieldeth food

[a scanty and miserable subsistence] for them and for their children" (whole families being thus driven forth from their homes and from society). The wild ass a "solitary, timorous animal, whose only defence is its heels." The reference here rather to their solitude and fear than to savage wildness. A barbarous and uncivilized state, however, the likely consequence of the treatment they receive (Gen. xvi. 12, xxi. 20).—(Verse 6). They reap every one [by himself] his corn (*margin*, "mingled corn or dredge," a mixture of grain ordinarily used as fodder for cattle, and so generally translated, as in Is. xxx. 24, in the field (or perhaps, 'they reap [as hired or forced labourers] every one in a field which is not his own'); and they gather the vintage of the wicked (to obtain as hirelings a subsistence for their families; the proprietors of the vineyards characterized as wicked from their cruelty and oppression of the poor, but in time of vintage, glad to obtain their aid in gathering the grapes; or possibly obliged to render forced labour so common in the east). They cause the naked (the poor and poorly clad) to lodge (or 'pass the night') without clothing [having taken to pledge their upper garment, usually serving also as a covering by night] (Deut. xxiv. 13), that they have no covering in the cold (the nights in eastern countries being often as cold as the days are hot) (Gen. xxxi 40). They are wet (or drenched) with the showers (or heavy driving rains) of the mountains (where, as travellers often experience, such storms of wind and rain are common), and embrace the rock (clinging to some cave or hollow in its side) for want of a shelter."

The picture presented in the eighth verse suggests—

The True Rock and its Shelter.

1. *As sinners men are by nature in the condition of the persons here referred to,—exposed to a storm.* That storm God's righteous anger on account of sin. The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. i. 18; Col. iii. 6). "Wrath to come" awaiting the unsaved sinner. The day of judgment the great day of Divine wrath—the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. vi. 16, 17). That wrath compared to a storm. "On the wicked God shall rain snares (*Margin*, 'burning coals'), fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest" (Ps. xi. 6). No storm on earth ever equal to it. (i.) Other storms affect only the body, this the soul; (ii.) Others endure but for a short time, this for ever; (iii.) Others may have peace within; this fills with anguish and despair. Felt at times in the sinner's conscience even in this life. Even then intolerable. Escape from it in this life possible. Hereafter rocks and mountains invoked in vain for shelter. Exposure to the storm wherever sin is still unpardoned. Though now unfelt, yet even ready to burst upon the Christless soul. The case of men universally. Men by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. ii. 3.).

2. *Men in themselves are without a shelter.* Have no means of averting or screening themselves from deserved wrath. Wealth unable to purchase a shelter from it. Power unable to command one. Science unable to contrive one. Good works unable to merit one. Our own works like Adam and Eve's fig-leaved aprons. Monarch and mendicant equally powerless to screen themselves from this storm. No shelter without satisfaction to the demands of a righteous law. The required shelter to be strong enough to resist the brunt of the storm. Able to stand between the sinner and the storm that must otherwise beat on his defenceless head.

3. *Such a shelter provided in Christ.* Christ, given by God the Father for that purpose, came into the world to save sinners from the storm. Promised as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest (Is. xxxii. 2). Fitted to be such a shelter. God and man in one person. God manifest in the flesh. As man, Christ has done and suffered in our stead what the law of God demands in the way of obedience and penalty. As God in our nature, He is able to stand as a substitute for us, and to give infinite value to His obedience and suffering in our stead. Provided for us in pure love on the part of God (John iii. 16). God's will that all should flee to and find shelter in this rock. Christ as a rock—(1.) *Affords perfect safety to the soul that trusts in Him.* A rock is strong, firm, impenetrable. None ever trusted in Him and perished; (2) *Never changes.* A rock the most abiding and unchanging object in nature. Christ the Rock of Ages—the everlasting Rock. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. (3) *Is sufficient to receive and shelter all who betake themselves to Him.* Rocky caverns in Judæa, as the cave of Adullam, large enough to contain thousands of men. Room in Christ for millions at once. Millions sheltered in this Rock already, and yet there is room. (4) *Is comfortable and well replenished.* Caverns sometimes found already furnished with necessary articles left there by previous occupants; the contrary, however, being generally the case. In Christ, all things provided needful for comfort and well-being, both here and hereafter. Christ made of God to those

who are in Him, both wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. i. 30). The world, life, death, all things, ours when we are Christ's. All fulness in Him, out of which we may receive even grace upon grace. All our needs supplied. In the world tribulation, but in Him peace. Grace found in Him sufficient for daily duty, daily temptation, daily trial. (5) *Is accessible to all.* Stands open and free. Its entrance obstructed by no formidable barrier. No steep and rugged height to climb in order to reach it. Accessible even to a child. Entered not by toil or merit, but by *faith*,—believing God's testimony true concerning it, and so trusting in it. Over its portal stand the words: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. (6) *All are welcome to its shelter.* Entrance without money and without price. No qualification required but sense of need, desire for shelter, and belief in its sufficiency. "A guilty, helpless sinner desiring shelter," a sufficient passport. All classes without distinction invited to enter and be safe.

1. *This Rock is to be "embraced."* A rock of no use for shelter but as it is fled to, entered, and clung to. Christ is for personal acceptance, appropriation, and trust. The ark, when made, to be entered by Noah and his family. Not enough to hear of the rock, look at it, understand about it, or be near it. Must be entered and "embraced." "Found *in* Christ" gives safety, not found *near* Him. No time to be lost in entering this Rock. Too late when the storm descends. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time! behold *now* is the day of salvation!"

Important question. Where am I? In the Rock? or still exposed to the storm? If the former, then "let the inhabitant of the Rock sing," and praise aloud the God of his salvation (Is. xlii. 11). If the latter is still the case, the call is, Come in *now*. The door still open. Still room. Delay not. Why remain outside exposed to the storm? Death hastens. The door will soon be shut. Entrance may within another hour be impossible. Then no shelter from the storm for evermore. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

III. Proceeds further to describe the cruelty and oppression of the ungodly rich, and their apparent impunity (verse 2). "They pluck the fatherless from the breast (infants whose fathers are already dead, and whom these men snatch from the widowed mother's breast to make their own, as pledges or in payment of some real or pretended debt), and take a pledge of the poor (either the poor man himself to be their bondslave till the debt is paid, as Lev. xxv 39; Matt. xviii. 25; or his *garment*, as ch. xxii. 6). They cause him (the poor whose garment they have taken in pawn) to go naked, without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry (the handful of corn they have plucked to satisfy their hunger, or the gleanings of the harvest field, which were usually regarded, and were afterwards by the law of Moses expressly appointed, as the perquisite of the poor, Lev. xix 9); which make oil within their walls (for the benefit of these rich oppressors; or 'who toil at noontide in their vineyards' as hired, or rather as forced, labourers), and tread their wine-presses and suffer thirst" (not being permitted to allay their thirst with the juice of the grapes they were laboriously expressing.)

> "Slaves in the midst of nature's bounty curst,
> And in the loaden vineyard suffer thirst."
> *Addison's Letters from Italy*

Cruelty and oppression not confined to the country (verse 12). "Men (or 'the dying') groan [under injuries and oppressions] from the city [where justice is wont to be exercised, and where fear might be supposed to restrain evil-doers), and the soul of the wounded—[not only having their spirits but their very life crushed out of them by oppression] crieth out [to God and men for help, or to God for vengeance]: yet God layeth not folly to them"—(apparently lays it not to their charge, or appears to give no heed to it; or, "does nothing absurd" or unbecoming His Divine character in permitting such things; or, according to another way of reading the word here rendered "folly," "pays no attention to their prayer," viz., that of these suffering and oppressed ones). The frequent complaint in the Psalms that the wicked oppress the godly poor with impunity, while God appears to take no notice either of the crimes of the one party or the sufferings of the other (Ps. x. 1—14; xxxv. 17; xlii. 9; xliv 23, 24). Observe—

1. *Crimes committed and cruelty perpetrated while God keeps silence* (Ps. l. 21). Sentence against an evil work not often speedily executed (Ecc. viii. 11). Yet forbearance no acquitance.

2. *The effect of sin to harden the heart and deaden the feelings of humanity.*

3. *Love of power or gain stops at no crime or cruelty to attain its object.*

4. *Sin assimilates men to Satan, the "murderer from the beginning."*

5. *Great sufferings often superinduced by other men's sins* (verse 12).

6. *The cry of oppressed ones terrible for the oppressor* (James v. 4).

7. *City as well as country the theatre of the oppressions of some and the sufferings of others* (verse 12). Solemn warning in this verse for such cities as London. Eternity alone will reveal how many lives have been crushed out of men and women by oppressive labour and scanty remuneration.

IV. Describes other classes of wicked men,—*those who practise sin in secrecy and under the cover of darkness* (verse 13). "They (or 'these,' as distinguished from the former) are of those that rebel against the light (hating and shunning it as unfavourable to their wicked deeds, John iii. 19, 20); they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof" (prefer darkness to light, and night to day, for the perpetration of their crimes). The first of these classes, the *Murderer* (verse 14). "The murderer rising with the light (at earliest dawn) killeth the poor and needy [as unable to resist him and his demands], and in the night is as a thief" (or, "acts the thief"). In the East, murders are committed at early dawn, the most favourable part of the day both for travelling and work, while thieves or housebreakers practise their crimes during the night.—The *second* class, the *Adulterer* (verse 15). "The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight (the evening or night, as more favourable for his purpose, Prov. vii. 9, saying, No eye shall see me, and disguiseth (muffles up or puts a mask on) his face. In the dark they (the two classes already mentioned, or perhaps a *third, Burglars* or Housebreakers) dig through houses (insinuating themselves, like the adulterer, or literally, digging an entrance for themselves, like the housebreaker, through the mud walls of the houses) which they had marked for themselves (or 'having shut themselves up') in the daytime; they know not the light (—hate and shun it). For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death (as hateful and as feared, as discovering and detecting their evil deeds (Eph. v. 13); or, the shadow of death is to them as morning,—darkness is as desirable and delightful to them as morning is to others); if one know them (or discover them, or 'when one can recognize, people,' *i.e.*, in the light of the morning), they are in the terrors of the shadows of death" (or, "it is the terrors of, &c., to them"; or, "the terrors, &c., are upon them.") Observe—

1. *The character of sin, that loves the darkness for its commission.* A reptile that loves the darkness of caves and dungeons. A work of darkness, to be practised only out of observation, and in the ignorance of God and truth. A testimony to the value and excellence of godliness, that it does not fear the light (John iii. 21).

2. *Sin opposed to the light of truth as well as to the light of day.* Hence hatred to the truth, which both exposes and opposes sin. The great condemnation, to have the light and yet hate and avoid it (John iii. 20). The sin of Christless persons in a Christian land, neighbourhood, or family.

3. *A sovereign authority in light to keep men from evil deeds.*

4. *The present in many places a time of light; hence corresponding responsibility.*

5. *Murder a common crime where not restrained by fear* (verse 14). "Feet swift to shed blood," part of the inspired description of fallen humanity (Rom. iii. 15).

6. *Sin aggravated when committed with purpose and deliberation* (verse 15).

7. *The ungodly, when not committing iniquity, often plotting it.*

8. *Sin committed in forgetfulness of God.* "No eye seeth me."

9. *The wicked often tortured between lust and fear.* Raging lust before commission; deadly fear of detection in and after it.

10. *Pleasures of sin dearly bought.* The terrors of the shadow of death sooner or later the consequence of it. The ways of transgressors hard.

V. Describes the experience of the wicked (verse 18). "He is swift as the waters (or, 'light on the face of the waters;' carried away by Divine vengeance as the foam or other light substance on the surface of the stream; or, gradually and quietly, though swiftly, borne along to the grave where he finally disappears); their portion (or estate) is cursed (—ultimately abandoned to desolation) in the earth (or land): he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards (—is cut off ultimately from his former haunts, pleasures, and pursuits, 'from the cheerful ways of men'). Drought and heat [in summer] consume the snow waters (—gradually dry up the torrents and mountain streams formed by the melted snow (ch. vi. 15, 18); so doth the grave (—death and the invisible world, which sooner or later swallow up and cause to disappear from the earth) those that have sinned [in the gross and open way already, and yet to be, described]. The womb (even the mother that bare him) shall forget him (so worthless his character, and utterly abandoned by, and cut off from, friends and relatives): the worm shall feed sweetly upon him (or 'shall be sweet to him,' his only companion now, ch. xxi. 33); he shall be no more remembered [having done nothing to cause his memory to be cherished, but the contrary (Prov. x. 7)]: and wickedness (or the wicked man) shall be broken as a tree"

[useless and already decayed]. Observe—

1. *The character of the selfish and ungodly, however rich, a worthless one.* The sinner in his best and most prosperous state light as foam on the surface of the stream.

2. *All the sinner's earthly enjoyments speedily brought to an end.* Slowly or suddenly, the grave terminates his pleasures and pursuits (verse 19). The pleasures of sin but for a season.

3. *The grave only formidable to those who have led a sinful life, and die without renewal of heart and removal of guilt.*

4. *Humbling contrast between the grave and its wormy inhabitants, and the sinful indulgences and worldly pomp of a godless and prosperous life.* The rich man in the Gospel lifts up his eyes in hell, and craves, not for deliverance, but a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

5. *Sin soon covers men's names with oblivion, and makes even their nearest relations to forget them* (verse 20). "The righteous is held in everlasting remembrance, but the memory of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. x. 7).

VI. Returns to the character and ways of the ungodly as meriting the punishment already mentioned (verses 21—24). "He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not (thus adding affliction to the afflicted, barrenness being held a reproach and at the same time leaving the widow without natural defenders), and doeth not good to the widow (not only withholding the sympathy and succour which her circumstances claim, but acting towards her in a way the very reverse). He draweth also the mighty with his power (attaching him to his interests for the purpose of oppressing others); he riseth up (for the purpose of completing his wicked designs; or, he rises to power), and no man is sure of life (so formidable his power and so regardless of right). Though it be given him to be in safety (by God himself, who bears long with him instead of punishing him at once in the midst of his wickedness), whereon he resteth (living at ease and in security in consequence of this forbearance); yet his (viz., God's) eyes are upon their ways (though now keeping silence and apparently winking at his evil deeds). They are exalted for a little while but are gone (*Heb.* and *Marg.* 'and are not,' are no more, but disappear from the stage). and (are) brought low (by death which terminates at once their power and their pride); they are taken out of the way as all others (even the meanest whom they have oppressed), and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn." Observe—

1. *Injury done to a fellow creature a sin marked by God; that sin aggravated when the injury is done to one already in any way afflicted* (verse 21). The afflicted, destitute and reproached, have already claims on our sympathy and succour.

2. *A sin in the sight of God, not only to injure the afflicted and destitute, but even to withhold our sympathy and aid.* Not to do the good in our power, a sin as well as to do evil (Prov. iii. 27; xxiv. 11, 12). Neglect of the fifth commandment a sin as truly as the transgression of the sixth. Sins of omission discover the character and bring condemnation as truly as those of commission. The sins produced at last day for judgment, especially the latter (Matt. xxv. 42—45.) Pure and undefiled religion before God, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James i. 27).

3. *A high aggravation of sin when we not only do wrong ourselves, but endeavour by our influence to draw others into the same practice* (verse 22). Ahab specially branded in the Bible as not only having sinned himself, but also "made Israel to sin." The character of the ungodly not only to sin themselves but to draw others into participation in their sin (Prov. i. 10—14).

4. *An aggravated sin to abuse God's goodness and forbearance to the practice of evil* (verse 23). God's goodness intended, on the contrary, to lead to repentance (Rom. ii. 4). Sin persevered in on the calculation that "to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant" (Is. lvi. 12).

5. *Sin, though passed over for the present, yet marked for future visitation, if not prevented by timely repentance* (verse 23). Sentence against an evil work not speedily executed. The sinner allowed to do evil a hundred times (Ex. viii. 11, 12). Yet God's eyes are upon men's ways.

6. *The power and pride of the ungodly but of short continuance* (verse 24).

7. *Sinners often cut off when their prosperity has reached its highest pitch, like the "tops of the ears of corn."*

8. *Men spared to ripen either for mercy or judgment.*

VII. Challenges contradiction or refutation (verse 25). "If it be not so now [that the case is as I represented it], who will make me a liar (or prove me in error), and make my speech nothing worth?" Job's position that of Asaph (Ps. lxxiii.), that the ungodly often live long and prosper in this world, and are without any "bands in their death," though ultimately brought to judgment. His position assailed by his friends as derogatory to God's righteousness as the Governor of the world, and as savouring of infidelity. In Job's view, his position un-

affected by their speeches and arguments. Observe:—

1. *Our duty to see that the views we hold in regard to God and His moral government rest on solid grounds.*

2. *Our duty in regard to subjects upon which there is room for doubt, to be open to conviction and argument on the opposite side.*

3. *Our views on all religious subjects to be brought to the touchstone of reason and Scripture.* Truth able to bear testing.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIRD SPEECH OF BILDAD THE SHUHITE.

His speech either a very abortive one, or it includes, as some think, the following chapter from the fifth verse to the end, the first four verses of that chapter probably belonging to the next one, but, by the mistake of transcribers, placed at the beginning of this.

The object of the speech to show Job's presumption in thinking himself righteous before God, and in wishing to debate his cause with Him as an innocent sufferer.

With this view he sets forth the character and attributes of God. Appears to charge Job, though only by implication, with rebellion against the Divine Majesty, and to wish to overwhelm him with a view of the Divine power and holiness.

The speech true in its statements, just in its sentiments, sublime in its poetry. The argument employed in it solid, and similar to that ultimately used by Jehovah Himself to silence Job. The speech wanting in appropriateness to the case in hand, and in sympathy with the party addressed.

I. Bildad briefly descants on the attributes of God.

1. *His sovereignty* (verse 2). "*Dominion* and fear are with him." God not named. With Him whom thou challengest. Him emphatic. With Him and no other. God "the great and only Potentate." The Supreme Ruler in heaven, earth, and hell. Therefore not to be resisted with impunity. As the supreme universal Ruler, God must be righteous in all His works. Therefore wicked, as well as ruinous, to oppose Him. God's attribute of sovereignty frequently insisted on in the Scriptures. Examples: Ps. ciii. 19; Is. xlv. 9; Dan. iv. 25, 34, 35. Fitted—(1) To silence murmurings under affliction and trial.—(2) To pacify and rest the soul under dark dispensations and mysterious providences. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"—(3) To comfort the heart depressed by a view of abounding sin and misery, and of the apparent triumph of iniquity in the world. God, as Sovereign Ruler, able to make the wrath of man to praise Him, and to restrain the remainder of that wrath. Suffering only the discipline employed, or the punishment inflicted, by the Supreme Governor. Hell his prison-house for rebellious and impenitent subjects. His sovereignty consistent with the permission of rebellion and evil in His dominions. Will one day bring all things into full subjection.

2. *Terrible majesty.* "Dominion and *fear* are with him." "With God is terrible majesty" (ch. xxxvii. 22). God's majesty fitted to awaken fear. All the earth to stand in awe of Him. "Who shall not fear Thee?"—the song in heaven (Rev. xv. 4). "God greatly to be feared even in the assembly of his saints" (Ps. lxxxix. 7). Seraphim cover their faces with their wings before Him (Is. vi. 2). The posts of the temple-doors and the granite mass of Sinai shook at His presence (Is. vi. 4; Ps. lxviii. 8). John, in Patmos, from fear fell at His feet as dead (Rev. i. 17). Sin especially makes men afraid of God. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8).—As a consequence of God's sovereignty and Divine majesty, He preserves harmony among the highest classes of His creatures. "He maketh peace in His high places."—(1) Among the *angels*, His higher intelligent creatures (Ps. ciii. 20). God's will done perfectly in heaven. No rebellious thought, word, or action found there. All loving, reverential submission to, and acquiescence in, the Divine will. Rebellion once permitted to enter, but immediately subdued and expelled for ever. Heaven a place of peace and harmony, order and tranquillity, safety and felicity. No hostile attempts suffered to be made upon its inhabitants from without; no disturbance or disquiet to arise within.—(2) Among the *heavenly bodies.* These preserved by the Supreme Ruler in their respective orbits. No collision or injurious disturbance permitted from each other. "Music of the spheres," an idea as true as it is beautiful.—Inferences: (1) *If peace prevails in His high places, it should also do so in His lower ones*—the earth and its inhabitants. Monstrous for man to be in rebellion against His Creator.—(2) *If God makes peace in His high places, He will also make it in His lower ones* God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. To make

peace on earth, the object of His Son's mission into the world. "On earth peace" (Luke ii. 14).—(3) *God the great peace-maker.* His nature peace. True peace the peace of God. All true peace from Him. The God of peace The author not of confusion, but of peace, order, and concord (1 Cor. xiv. 33).—(4) *No rebellion which God is not able to quell.* The continuance of rebellion on earth not the result of God's weakness or indifference, but of His patience, compassion, and wisdom. The long-suffering of God is salvation. Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. iii. 9, 15). He who makes peace in His places, is *able* to make it also in His lower ones.—(5) *God's rule an efficient one.* He not only wishes, but *makes* peace. Our great comfort. Man's efforts to make peace in the world, in a country, in a family, in himself, ineffectual. God able to subdue all things to Himself, and so to make peace. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth (Ps. xlvi. 9). Shall sepak peace to the heathen (Zech. ix. 10). Commands peace to raging winds and threatening waves. Speaks peace to the troubled soul: "Be of good comfort; thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace."

3. *His power and greatness* (ver. 3). "Is there any number of his armies?" These armies are—(1) *Angels* (Ps. ciii. 21). These innumerable (Ps. lxviii. 17; Rev. v. 11; Dan. vii. 10). Angels of light doubtless much more numerous than those of darkness. Yet of these a legion, or some thousands, found in one single person (Mark v. 9, 13). Milton rightly sings—

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

The inhabitants of this earth probably only as a drop in the ocean compared with the "innumerable company of angels."—(2) *Heavenly bodies* (Is. xl. 26). These to us literally innumerable. Vastly more numerous than could be dreamt of by Bildad at that time. Only a very few of these visible to the naked eye. An immense multitude of dense clusters of stars apparently scattered throughout all space. These clusters like so many vast armies. The whole aggregate of these starry worlds a mighty host drawn up in endless battalions, probably only visible at once to the eye of the Almighty. Our Galaxy, or Milky Way, one of those immense clusters of stars or suns, with nearly thirty times as many towards the centre as near the extremities,—being rather a succession of irregular masses, more or less connected by isthmuses or bridges of orbs, stretching from the one to the other, in any one of which the number of stars is past reckoning. Yet this immense cluster, or combination of clusters, with its stars scattered by millions like glittering dust, is only one of these numerous "armies" that compose the celestial host. Upwards of two thousand of these nebulous clusters discovered in the northern, and more than one thousand in the southern heavens, which, by powerful telescopes, have been resolved into innumerable stars.—(3) *All creatures employed in serving God and ministering to His will.* So locusts, &c., spoken of as Jehovah's "great army" (Joel ii. 25). The army of the Medes and Persians His weapons against Babylon (Is. xiii. 5; Jer. l. 14). "Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word," included among his armies (Ps. cxlviii. 8; Job xxxviii. 22, 23). All nature His servants when "the Lord of hosts mustereth his host of the battle" (Is. xiii. 4).

> "What is creation less
> Than a capacious reservoir of means
> Formed for His use, and ready at His will?"

4. *His goodness and beneficence.* "On whom doth not his light arise." His light is: (1) Literally and physically the light of *the sun in the heavens.* "His going forth is from the end of the earth, and his circuit unto the ends of it: nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. xix. 6). "He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good." All lands, classes, characters, individuals, partakers of the precious benefit. Its preciousness only fully realized by those who have long felt its want—surrounded by "clouds instead, and ever-during dark."—(2) Figuratively, *His favour and providential goodness.* This universal. "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 35). "The Lord loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. x. 18). He sendeth rain both on the just and on the unjust. "Giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xvi. 17). God the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift (James i. 17).—(3). "The light of *truth and saving knowledge*" (2 Cor. iv. 16). That light designed for all men. Christ the Light and the Saviour of the world. The true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John i. 9). A light to lighten the Gentiles. His birth glad tidings of great joy, which should be to all people. His commission to His disciples, Go ye unto all the world, and preach the Gospel to every crea-

ture. In Paul's time that Gospel had already come into all the known world (Col. i. 6). Christ lifted up to draw all men unto Him. The duty of the Church everywhere to hold forth this light (Phil. ii. 15, 16). Though the light may arise on all, men may wilfully shut it out, or not care to come forth and enjoy it. Unbelief closes the shutters against the light of life. Men may love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. No argument against the unversality of light that some men are blind, or shut up in prison, or refuse to enjoy its beams. The condemnation of many that light is come into the world (John iii. 19).

5. *His purity and holiness.*—Verse 5. "Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight." The moon and stars probably visible at the time, the dialogue being held in the soft moonlight of a tranquil evening in Arabia. Moon and stars apparently the fairest and purest objects in the visible creation. Yet even these impure in the view of and in comparison with God. The moon loses its brightness when seen beside Him, as the stars pale before the rising sun. *All, even the purest, creatures, impure in comparison with God.* Seraphim cover their faces and their feet with their wings while standing before Him. Their adoring exclamation one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts" (Is. vi. 23. The song of glorified Saints: "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord? for thou only are holy" (Rev. xv. 4) Isaiah, in the view of Jehovah's glory in the temple, exclaims: "Woe is me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips" (Is. vi. 5). Imperfection and variableness inherent in every creature. Spots on the sun and dark shadows on the surface of the moon. Absolute purity and perfection alone in God. The slightest shade of evil or imperfection infinitely removed from His spotlessly holy nature. All sin His perfect and unchangeable abhorrence. The lustre of stars and the holiness of angels only a faint reflection from His own.

II. Bildad's inference (verse 4—6).

1. *From God's perfections in themselves.* Verse 4.—"How then can man (*Hebrew*, 'weak, miserable man,'—*enosh*) be justified (*Heb.*, 'just' or righteous) with God? Or How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" If God be such, how can man be righteous "*with Him?*" (1) In comparison with Him; (2) In His sight; (3) In controversy with Him as a party; (4) Before His tribunal as a judge.

Bildad's inference intended to have pecial reference to Job. Founded on man's character as a creature, — poor, weak, miserable, liable to suffering, disease, and, death. The reference rather to his physical than to his moral character. The latter however bound up with the former. Both the result of the Fall in Eden. Bildad infers man's impurity from his physical infirmity as a creature. Man in his best estate necessarily impure in comparison with God. His moral impurity, however, not from his being a *creature*, but a *fallen creature*. "God made man upright." Adam created in God's image and after God's likeness. As he left His Creator's hands, pronounced by Himself "very good." A suffering and a sinful state the twin effect of the first disobedience. "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. v. 12, 19). Only by the grace of God and the obedience of a second Adam can man now be righteous. The righteousness in which a man can now stand that of one who is both God and man,—one "born of a woman" like other men, and yet, unlike other men, begotten by the Father, and conceived in a virgin's womb by the power of the Holy Ghost. *The man Christ Jesus the specimen of a righteous man without sin.* All believers viewed as righteous in Him. Made also partakers of His holy nature and character. The Gospel of the Grace of God gives the only answer to Bildad's question, How can man be just with God? The answer, By union with the God-man Christ Jesus, effected through faith in him by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A man is now righteous with God, *legally*, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness *to* him; pure in God's sight, *morally*, through the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost *in* him. Viewed in Christ, God sees "no iniquity in Jacob." Washed by faith in the blood of the Lamb we are made "whiter than the snow." "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee (Cant. iv. 7). Man, as "born of a woman," is unclean; as born again of God, is or shall be pure as God is pure (1 John iii. 2, 3).

2. *From the impurity in God's sight belonging to the purest creatures.* Verse 6—"How much less [pure in his sight is] man that is a worm (or maggot, the product of putridity), and the son of man who is a [crawling] worm (kindred terms used to denote the lowest state of degradation as well as weakness and defilement)." If the purest creatures are not clean in God's sight, how then can man be so? Man made lower than the angels (Ps. viii. 5). A worm—(1) In his place as a creature. (2) In his character as a sinner.

Bildad's second question also answered by the Gospel. *Man, though a worm, can be clean*

in God's sight. Christ, the Holy One of God, a worm, as a partaker of our weak humanity. Believers made one with Him are partakers of His pure and holy nature. The Son of God became a worm with man, to make worms sons of God with Himself. Every believer now possessed of a higher and holier nature than that of angels—the nature of the Son of God (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 30; 2 Pet. i. 4). The word of Christ, received by faith, the instrument in producing this purity (John xv. 3; xvii. 17; Eph. v. 26; 1 Pet. i. 22).

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOB'S REPLY TO BILDAD.

Job, more alive to Bildad's want of sympathy than to the excellence of his sentiments in regard to the Divine perfections, speaks somewhat petulantly,—certainly with irony and sarcasm. Job not yet humbled. He hears of God "by the hearing of the ear," but as yet his eye does not see him (ch. xlii. 5). Mere verbal representations, even of the truth, not sufficient to humble and pacify the soul. God must reveal Himself.

Uncertain whether the larger portion of this chapter, *viz.*, from verse 5 to the end, does not properly belong to the preceding one as part of Bildad's speech. Viewed as belonging to Job, its object would be to show that Job could as easily, and more comprehensively, descant on the Divine perfections as Bildad himself. The sentiments contained in the portion not affected by the question as to the speaker.

I. Job's ironical and indignant reflection on Bildad's speech (verses 2—4).

1. *Its want of sympathy and succour.* Verse 2—"How hast thou helped him that is without power! How savest thou the arm that hath no strength!" Means himself,—either seriously, as really without power and strength; or ironically, being so in the esteem of Bildad and his friends. Bildad's speech contained nothing calculated to support Job in his deep prostration. Its object rather to convict him of pride and self-righteousness, and to overwhelm him with a view of the Divine perfections. Job needed sympathy and support, and found none. So with his great antitype (Matt. xxvi. 40). Observe—(1) *Our duty to succour by our words those who are in trouble and distress, and to support those who are weak and ready to fall.* Words sometimes more effectual than deeds in helping those who are "without strength." Job's own practice in his better days (ch. iv. 3, 4). All the more painfully sensible of the want of it in his friends. (2) *Ministers and preachers to be careful in their ministrations and addresses to come up to their profession.* One great part of a minister's duty to support the weak, comfort the feeble-minded, and strengthen the tempted (Acts xx. 35; 1 Thess. ii. 7; v. 14; Heb. xii. 12). Peter required, when converted after his fall, to strengthen his brethren (Luke xxii. 32). The duty best discharged by those who have realized their own weakness and need of support. According to Luther, temptation one of the three things that make a preacher. Christ Himself able to succour them that are tempted, having been tempted Himself.

2. *Its want of suitable counsel.* Verse 3—"How hath thou counselled him that hath no wisdom!" Still refers to himself. Addressed by Bildad as if ignorant of the Divine perfections. Bildad's speech as void of counsel as of sympathy. Counsel never more needed than when in spiritual darkness and affliction. One of the blessings of true friendship. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel" (Prov. xxvii. 9). One of the offices of Jesus, as the Saviour of men and Head of His Church, to give counsel. Therefore possessed of "the spirit of counsel and might" (Isa. xi. 2). One of His titles, "The Counsellor" (Isa. ix. 6). One of the believer's privileges to enjoy such counsel (Ps. xvi. 7). Observe—(1) *The part of ministers, preachers, and Christians in general, to counsel erring, perplexed, and troubled souls* (i.) Men *out of Christ* constantly in need of right and loving counsel. Christ counsels such to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, &c (Rev. iii. 17, 18). Preachers and believers to do the same. (ii.) *Anxious souls* in need of sound counsel. The question to be wisely answered: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (iii.) *Believers themselves* often in circumstances requiring judicious spiritual counsel. (2) Ministers and others to seek to be well qualified to give true spiritual counsel both to perplexed believers and to anxious inquirers. The tongue of the spiritually-learned needed "to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. l. 4).

3. *Its defectiveness in regard to the matter in hand.* "How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is" ("the real truth," or "sound wisdom," as ch. xi. 6; Prov. viii 14). Bildad had declared the truth, but not

the whole truth, nor yet, in Job's view at least, the seasonable truth. Job did not require to be instructed by Bildad about the Divine perfections. It was one thing for these to be set forth by Bildad, and another for them to be exhibited by God Himself, as was afterwards done. Observe — (1) Not only is *truth* to be spoken in addressing men on Divine things, but the *whole* truth, and especially *seasonable* truth. (2) Words and high-sounding descriptions, however true, not suited to carry conviction to the hearts of hearers. General declamations about the Divine perfections not such as to meet the case either of the careless or the concerned. (3) *Preachers to be careful to give just representations of Divine things, and such as are adapted to meet the case of the hearers.* The pulpit not the place to indulge one's taste for elegant composition, learned research, metaphysical subtleties, or poetic description. Pompous common-places and flights of rhetoric only famish the hearers, and render the preacher himself ridiculous. A Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. Paul an example to preachers: would rather speak five words in the Church that he might teach others also, "than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor. xiv. 19).

4. *Its conceit.* Verse 4.—"To whom hast thou uttered words? (verses or set phrases)." Bildad's speech ridiculed by Job as rather mere words or set phrases; light-sounding diction, rather than plain homely truth suited to the occasion. Probably more of the traditional poetry of the country, which he pompously repeats to a man crushed under a weight of sorrow. Had treated Job as an ignorant and godless man. Had set himself forth as his teacher in regard to the Divine character and works. Had spoken as immensely Job's superior both in piety and knowledge. *Conceit one of the most repulsive and contemptible things in a preacher.* Modesty in regard to himself, and due respect for his hearears, to be exhibited by every teacher of Divine truth. Paul's example: "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another; nevertheless I have written to you in some sort, as putting you in mind" (1 Cor. x. 15; Rom. xv. 14, 15). Peter's "I put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. i. 12, ii. 1).

5. *Its want of originality and divine unction.* "Whose spirit (breath, or inspiration) came from thee." Job ridicules Bildad's speech as either an echo of those of his brothers, or a string of trite maxims of the sages; at the most, the effusion of his own spirit, not that of the spirit of God Says nothing against the sentiments themselves. However uttered by Bildad, they are recorded by the Spirit of God for our instruction. Observe — (1) Preachers to beware of giving other men's productions as their own. If other men's sermons are read or repeated, it should be acknowledged. (2) Preachers not to be mere imitators or retailers of other men's sentiments. (3) A preacher to speak from his own heart, if he would reach the hearts of his hearers. (4) Preachers to give to their hearers not merely the effusion of their own spirit, but what they have received from the Spirit of God. Five plain words uttered from the heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit worth more than five thousand of the most polished sentences, whether borrowed from others or the product of our own talent and study. The preacher who would win souls or edify believers, while not neglecting study and preparation, to be mainly concerned to receive his messages from God in answer to prayer, and to have the Spirit of God in the delivery of them. Two things to be sought by every preacher—a Divine unction *in* his discourses, and a Divine energy *with* them.

Stray hints for preachers:—

He who desires, according to Paul, to be apt to teach, must first himself be taught of God.—*Erasmus.*

Those are the best preachers to the common people who teach with the simplicity of a child.—*Luther.*

Let your discourses be neither absolutely without ornament, nor indecently clothed with it.—*Augustine.*

It requires all our learning to make things plain.—*Archbishop Usher.*

Preachers are to feed the people, not with gay tulips and useless daffodils, but with the bread of life, and medicinal plants springing from the margin of the fountain of salvation.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Very fine, sir—very fine; but people can't live upon flowers.—*Robert Hall.*

I had rather be fully understood by ten, than be admired by ten thousand.—*Dr. John Edwards.*

Aim at pricking the heart, not at stroking the skin.—*Jerome.*

Here lies the secret [of the actor's greater power in moving an audience than the preacher's]: you deliver your truths as if they were fictions; we deliver our fictions as if they were truths.—*Garrick.*

The prayer of an old writer: "Lord, let me never be guilty, by painting the windows, of hindering the light of thy glorious Gospel from shining powerfully into men's hearts."

Leigh Richmond's dying message to his son: "Tell him, his father learnt his most valuable lessons for the ministry, and his most useful experience, in the poor man's cottage."

"I'll preach as though I ne'er shall preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."
Richard Baxter.

II. Descants more largely on the Divine perfections and works both in creation and providence (verse 5—13).

1. *His sovereignty over the dead and the invisible world.* Verse 5—"Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof" (or, 'the dead groan from beneath the waters, and the inhabitants thereof'). Bildad had represented God as exercising sovereign dominion in his high places (verse xxv. 2). Here Job (if not Bildad himself) apparently shows that sovereignty extending to the lower world or place of the dead. The "dead," or shades of the departed, perhaps more especially the wicked dead, and in particular the giants or mighty ones before the flood (Gen. vi. 4). These represented as groaning or trembling from beneath, under the mighty hand of God upon them. The "waters" probably the "deep" or abyss (Luke viii. 31; Rom. x. 7), supposed by Jewish rabbis to be lower than the earth; the place of the dead (Rom. x. 7), and the prepared abode of the fallen angels from which they recoil with horror (Luke viii. 31). Perhaps the "fountains of the great deep," broken up at the time of the Deluge (Gen. viii. 11), and the "water under the earth" (Exod. xx. 4). Possibly what shall afterwards constitute the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. xx. 10, 14, 15; xxi. 8).

The language of the text according to the Old Testament view of the state of the dead in general. According to it the spirits of the departed still in conscious existence. That existence, however, one rather of pain and privation than of enjoyment. The place of the disembodied spirits represented as one of darkness (chap. x. 21, 22); Ps. lxxxviii. 12), and of pain (ch. xiv. 22). Hence the great shrinking from death on the part of Old Testament saints (Ps. xxx. 8, 9; lxxxviii. 9—12; Isa. xxxviii. 10—12, 17, 18). Yet Enoch and Elijah both taken to be with God. Abraham and Moses in a state of blessedness (Luke ix. 30, 31; xvi. 23). Lazarus comforted in the world of spirits, while Dives was tormented (Luke xvi. 25). The doctrine of the state of the dead only gradually developed. Its full exhibition reserved for the advent of the Messiah (2 Tim. i. 10). Possibly a change made in the state of departed saints after his resurrection (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). Perhaps, in more senses than one, Christ, after overcoming "the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."—(1) A separate state of conscious existence after death not only the doctrine of the Bible, but the general sense of mankind. Consistent with reason. Mind not necessarily dependent on matter or any material organization. (2) The state of the departed ungodly one of pain and trembling—"wailing and gnashing of teeth." The consciousness of God's power exercised in the invisible world only an increase to their suffering.

2. *God's perfect cognizance of the invisible world.* (Verse 6)—"Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." "Hell" (*Hebrew*, "Sheol;" *Greek*, "Hades") used in Scripture to denote—(1) The grave, or receptacle for the dead body. (2) The invisible world, or place of departed spirits in general, without respect to character or experience. The latter supposed by the Jews to be a vast cavern far in the interior of the earth. Probably the prison mentioned by Peter as enclosing the spirits of the disobedient Antediluvians (1 Peter iii. 19, 20). May include both prison and paradise. The place into which the disembodied spirit of the Saviour went, in order to satisfy the law of death as other men. Yet his spirit on the same day in Paradise (Luke xxiii. 43). The clause in the so-called Apostles' Creed, "he descended into hell," not found in the early Roman or Oriental creeds. First used as a part of the Creed by the Church of Aquileia, not quite 400 years after Christ. See *Pearson on the Creed*, Art. v. "Destruction" (*Hebrew*, "Abaddon," the name given to the Angel of the Bottomless Pit (Rev. ix. 11), like "hell," the place of the dead or of departed spirits, its inhabitants being "lost" to human view; perhaps more especially the place of lost men and angels. "Hell" and "destruction," as synonymous terms denoting the invisible world or place of the dead, found together also in Prov. xv. 11; xxvii. 20; perhaps another hint as to the period of the composition of the book. "Hell" and "death" mentioned together in Rev. i. 18; xx. 13, 14. Their keys in the hand of Jesus as Lord of the invisible world (Rev. i. 18.)—(1) Believers need have no fear in entering the invisible world. Christ their Saviour and Elder Brother has been there before them, and now holds the keys. (2) The grave with its countless dust, as well as the invisible world with its innumerable inhabitants, all open to the view of the

Almighty. The dust of His saints precious in his sight and cannot be lost (Ps. cxvi. 15). (3) The most secret depths of earth and sea, with their countless objects and inhabitants, open to the same omniscient eye. Not an animalcule or infusiorium, thousands of which are contained in a single drop of water, but is the object of His inspection and care. (4) "Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of men." There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Prov. xv. 11; Job xxxiv. 22).

3. *His power and wisdom in the works of Creation and Providence* (verses 7—13). (1) *In giving the earth and heavenly bodies their present situation, and suspending them in empty space.* Verse 7—"He stretcheth (or stretched) out [as a canopy] the north (or northern celestial hemisphere, the only part visible to Job and his friends, and here put for the heavens in general) over the empty place, and hangeth (or hung) the earth upon nothing." The former clause according to *appearance*, and the old opinion that the heavens formed an immense arch, or vault, stretching over the earth. The latter philosophically true, and a remarkable anticipation of the Newtonian theory of gravitation. The earth and planets suspended in empty space, and preserved in their orbit by the operation of two opposite forces, one (the *centripetal*) which attracts them to the sun, or centre of the system, the other (the *centrifugal*) which, in consequence of the rotatory motion given them, keeps them moving on in a circle or ellipse round the sun, instead of being drawn absolutely to it. The spherical form of the earth thus also indicated. "Earth self-balanced on her centre hung." (2) *In forming the clouds and preserving the watery particles collected in them.* Verse 8—"He bindeth up the waters (or watery vapours) in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them." Probably an allusion to the second day's work of creation—the formation of the firmament, or atmosphere, for the separation of the waters beneath from those above, and collecting the latter in clouds, and preserving them in their place. An obvious manifestation of Divine wisdom, power, and goodness. The provision made for the earth's fertility. Reservoirs of water kept far above the earth in clouds by the operation of natural laws. These clouds so constituted that, notwithstanding the quantity of water contained in them, they do not burst and discharge their contents in one vast destructive deluge. Their contents made on the contrary to fall in such gentle and temporary showers as to meet the earth's requirements. Such discharge made to result from a change in the temperature, or the influence of electricity. The clouds on one special occasion "rent under" their contents, when the "windows of heaven were opened" to deluge a disobedient world. A partial "rending" in extraordinarily heavy and deluging rains. (3) *In so collecting dense clouds as to darken the sky with them.* Verse 9—"He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." The sky, or heaven, viewed as God's throne (Matt. v. 34; Isa. lxvi. 1). Concealed by Him from time to time by a curtain of dark clouds. These clouds of His own formation, from the watery particles exhaled by the sun's heat from the earth and sea, and directed by currents of air into one locality. Clouds serve various and important purposes:—(i.) In irrigating the ground. (ii.) In moderating the heat. (iii.) In beautifying the sky. The beauty of the sky, especially at sunset, thus made to vie with that of the earth. Observe — *God himself invisible, though His agency is everywhere seen and felt.* His throne still there, though He spread a cloud over it. God to be trusted and to be believed in when we cannot see Him. (4) *In appointing the alternation of light and darkness, and the vicissitude of day and night.* Verse 10—"He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end" (or, "He hath drawn a circular boundary upon the waters with exact proportion of light and darkness;" or, "even to the limit of light with darkness," *i. e.*, where the light ceases and darkness begins;—*Margin*, "until the end of light with darkness"). Apparent allusion to the first day's work at the creation—the dividing the light from the darkness, and appointing the alternation of day and night (Gen. i. 3—5). The "bound" here mentioned probably the horizon. The earth popularly supposed to be a plane bounded by the "waters" of the ocean on which the vault of heaven appears to rest and to form a circular boundary,—the place where light ends, and darkness commences. The sun supposed to move from the eastern to the western boundary, where it disappears till the following morning. The description in the text, like others in the Bible, given popularly, according to appearance. The earth's diurnal rotation on its axis not then generally known. No object of the Bible to teach the facts that progressive science was in due time to discover. The language of the Bible popular, not scientific or philosophical. The horizon an apparent boundary between light and darkness. That boundary a part of God's work in creation and providence. Science only informs us *how*.

The alternation of light and darkness, day

and night, one of the most conspicuous and beneficial arrangements of the Divine Creator. Among its benefits are—(i.) An agreeable variety instead of the uniform sameness even of constant day. "The sweet approach of even and morn," the joyous thrill of sunrise, and the gorgeous beauty of sunset, due to this alternation. (ii.) Suitable seasons afforded for the varied requirements of men and other animals. Night and darkness suitable to man for rest, as daytime and light are for labour. The darkness of night necessary for predaceous animals obtaining their food. (iii.) Evening valuable as tranquillizing the mind, inviting to sober meditation and reflection, and affording opportunity for domestic and social enjoyment. Eventide the season chosen by Isaac for meditation in the fields (Gen. xxiv. 63).

"Eve following eve,
Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of home
Is sweetest! Moments for their own sake hail'd!"

(iv.) The earth kept cool and moistened with dew through the same wise and beneficent provision. (v.) Plants and animals mutually benefited by the interchange of light and darkness. "In the various processes of combustion, and by the respiration of animals, a large amount of the oxygen of the atmosphere, or its vital part, is withdrawn, and, united with carbon, is returned as carbonic acid—an ingredient deleterious to animal life. But this deteriorating process is counteracted, at least to a certain extent, by the vegetable tribes. The same luminous influence which serves to generate chromule (the green matter in plants), likewise aids the plant in decomposing the carbonic acid which has been absorbed; appropriating the carbon to the construction of the ligneous tissue, and returning the pure oxygen to the atmosphere, it fits it again for the purposes of respiration. Animals may therefore be viewed as preparing food for plants by the air which they vitiate; while plants, on the other hand, by their action under the influence of light, appropriate to themselves nourishment, and restore the air to its normal state" — *Professor Fleming's Temperature of the Seasons.* (6) The starry sky, with its entrancing beauty and elevating lessons, thus alone made visible. To the alternation of light and darkness—day and night—we owe the poet's magnificent description of Evening:—

"Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad.
Silence was pleased. Now glow'd the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, 'till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

God to be adored as the author of this beneficent interchange of light and darkness. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice." "The day is thine; the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun." "Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth" (Ps. lxv. 8; lxxiv. 16; civ. 20).—(5) *In exciting storms and disturbances in the earth and air.* Verse 11—"The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof." The visible heavens viewed as a magnificent edifice supported on columns. These imaginary pillars personified, and poetically represented as in some tremendous commotion of the earth or elements standing aghast at the apparent reproof of their Creator. That reproof supposed to be directed either against themselves or mankind. So the sea said to be dried up at His rebuke (Ps. cvi. 9; Nahum i. 4). The raging wind and waves literally rebuked by the Saviour, and hushed into a calm (Matt. viii. 26). Storms and earthquakes among the most striking incidents in nature. Especially awful and sublime in hot climates and mountainous regions. Naturally strike the mind as indications or suggestions of Divine displeasure. Strictly due to the Divine will, and, though effected through the agency of natural laws, a part of His providential government. Serve various and important purposes—(i.) Morally: as—(*a*) Reminding us of the existence, attributes, and agency of a Divine Ruler and Judge. Few persons fail, during a tremendous thunderstorm, to think of a Supreme Being. (*b*) Tending to produce elevating and reverential thoughts of God. One of the sublimest descriptions of a thunderstorm, with its effects both physically and morally, found in Ps. xxix. 3—10. (*c*) Suggesting the instability of earthly things and the danger to which human life is exposed, with the importance of securing the favour of God and the assurance of a better world. (*d*) Tending to elevate the mind and strengthen the character by bringing it in contact with the sublime and terrible in Nature.—(ii.) Physically: as—(*a*) Purifying the atmosphere. (*b*) Tending to the greater irrigation of the earth. (*c*) Aiding in the processes of vegetation.—(6) *In His power over the ocean in exciting and stilling its waves.* Verse 12—"He divideth (or cleaveth) the sea with his power; and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud" (or "stilleth its pride"—*Hebrew*, "Rahab").

The sea, so uncontrollable by man, entirely subject to the will and power of God. Already literally divided, so as to form a pathway in the midst of its waters (Exod. xiv. 21, 22; Is. li. 10—15). Ordinarily divided and cleft by storms and tempests. By the same Divine power, its towering billows and yawning chasms made to disappear, and the storm changed into a calm (Ps. lxv. 7; cvii. 29). Done by Christ (Matt. viii. 26). Observe — *Power* more conspicuous in exciting the storm at sea; *understanding*, in quelling it. The latter frequently in answer to prayer (Ps. cvii. 28, 29; Matt. viii. 25, 26). Prayer in such circumstances the voice of nature (Jonah i. 5, 6).—(7) *In making the sky bright and serene by day and studding it with stars by night.* Verse 13—"By his spirit (or 'breath,' his power or command; or perhaps the Third Person in the Godhead, also engaged in creation, *Gen.* i. 2) he hath garnished the heavens (or, 'the heavens are brightness or beauty,' *i.e.* bright and beautiful); and his hand hath formed (possibly 'wounded,' or 'slain') the crooked (gliding or darting) serpent" (perhaps the Zodiac, with its twelve signs or constellations, anciently represented as a serpent with its tail in its mouth; or, more probably, a northern constellation, called Draco, or the Dragon, the description being taken from the living serpent). Apparent allusion to the fourth day's work in creation (Gen. i. 14—16). The bright clear heaven lighted up with sunshine, a beautiful object, especially as succeeding a storm or the darkness of night. Still more beautiful is the nocturnal sky, spangled with stars. Affords an impressive exhibition of Divine power (Is. xl. 26). The stars countless in number. In themselves, probably so many suns and centres of systems like our own. Those forming any of the constellations millions of miles apart from each other. A nebula or white fleecy speck in the belt of Orion, resolved by the telescope into a mass of stars at incalculable distances from us and from each other. Stars early grouped, for convenience, into imaginary figures of men, animals, &c.

Some terms and ideas in the preceding verse also brought together in Is. li. 9; xxvii. 1; Ps lxxxix. 10. Rahab here rendered "proud," or "pride;" used also as a proper name for Egypt, while Pharaoh is symbolized by the dragon or leviathan—the crocodile of the Nile.—Operations in the natural world analogous to those in the social and moral. The natural world itself a mirror of the spiritual. The towering billows of the ocean a picture of the swelling pride of God's enemies, as exemplified in Egypt and her hosts at the time of the exodus (Ps. xv. 7). Monsters of the land and sea symbolical of cruel and injurious men, as well as of Satan and his infernal legions. The power that quells the one employed in subduing the other. A reference in the text supposed by some to the exodus, and also to Gen. iii. 15.

III. Reflection on the greatness of the Almighty's works. Verse 14—"Lo, these are parts (outlines or extremities) of his ways; but how little a portion (or, 'what a mere whisper') is heard of him (or of what is 'in Him'—His being and perfections); but the thunder (or full manifestation) of his power who can understand?" The stupendous works and operations of His hands which are visible to us only a small part—the mere outline or extremities—of the whole. What we see and hear of in relation to God and His works, as compared with the fulness of His power, only a mere whisper in comparison with the mighty thunder. Observe—

1. *Much more to be known of God and His works than is possible for us to know in our present state.* Yet all His visible ordinary operations would be regarded as miracles, if not seen daily.

2. *A sound and deep theology grounded on this verse.* Man's knowledge confined to parts only of God's ways. The extremities or forthgoings of His administration on earth only visible. The springs, principles, and anterior steps above and out of man's sight.—*Dr. Chalmers.* The humbling acknowledgment of those who have penetrated farthest into the mysteries of nature. "The phenomena of matter and force lie within our intellectual range. . . . But behind and above, and around all, the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved."—*Professor Tyndall, Lecture to Working Men at the Dundee British Association Meeting*, Sept., 1867. "Alike in the external and the internal worlds, the man of science sees himself in the midst of perpetual changes, of which he can discover neither the beginning nor the end. In all directions his investigations eventually bring him face to face with an insoluble enigma; and he ever more clearly perceives it to be an insoluble enigma.—*Herbert Spencer's First Principles.* "All our science is but an investigation of the mode in which the Creator acts; its highest laws are but expressions of the mode in which he manifests His agency to us. And when the physiologist is inclined to dwell unduly upon his capacity for penetrating the secrets of nature, it may be salutary for him to reflect that, even should he succeed in placing his department of study on a level with those physical sciences in which the most complete knowledge of

causation (using that term in the sense of 'unconditional sequence') has been acquired, and in which the highest generalizations have been attained, he is still as far as ever from being able to comprehend that power which is the efficient cause alike of the simplest and most minute, and of the most complicated and most majestic, in the universe,"—*W. B. Carpenter, General and Comparative Physiology.*

3. *A glorious increase of knowledge awaiting the believer in another world.* There we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12). From this ever-enlarging enlightenment the proud unbeliever, however scientific and philosophical now unhappily, cuts himself off. To him the future will be a world of darkness, not of light.

4. *Exertions of Divine power yet to be displayed even in connection with this earth far beyond what has been already witnessed.* What the Bible declares, observation confirms, sound reason assents to, and what every genuine Christian cordially believes, of a resurrection of the dead, is only an example of such power (Matt. xxii. 26; Eph. i. 19, 20). Resurrection a miracle; but even such a miracle only something of "the thunder of His power." Why thought incredible with a Being who is Almighty (Acts xxvi. 8)?

5. *The lower exertions of God's power in the universe beyond man's comprehension; how much the higher?* In the presence of Divine declarations, the part of sound *philosophy*, as well of true *piety*, is to *believe* and *adore*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JOB'S REPLY TO THE FRIENDS IN GENERAL.

Job now alone in the field. Zophar, who should have followed Bildad, and to whom Job had given opportunity to speak, has apparently nothing to say. Job, therefore, after a pause, resumes his discourse, but in a different tone. Speaks more calmly, and even more solemnly. Declares, even with an appeal to the Almighty, that, notwithstanding all he still suffers at the hand of God, and however God seems to treat him as a guilty person, he is resolved, as a sincere and upright man, to maintain the integrity of his past life, and not, for the sake of bettering his condition, as his friends would persuade him, admit hypocritically the justice of their reasoning and of their charges against him. Declares His utter abhorrence of all ungodliness, oppression, and hypocrisy, and maintains, along with the friends, that however wickedness may appear for a time to prosper, it is certain, sooner or later, to end in misery and ruin.

Job represented (verse 1) as again "taking up his parable," or "proverb"—a weighty, sententious discourse or saying, such as uttered by sages and prophets (Numb. xxiii. 7; xxiv. 3—15; Ps. xlix. 4; lxxviii. 2; Prov. i. 16; xxvi. 7). In the New Testament used in the sense of extended similitude. The latter part of the chapter, from verse 11 to the end, from its connection and position, one of the most perplexing portions of the book.

I. Job's resolution to maintain his innocence. Verse 26.—"As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment (has for some mysterious purpose, dealt with me contrary to the justice of my cause and the uprightness of my character, and who still refrains from declaring my innocence, or affording me an opportunity of pleading my cause before Him), and the Almighty who hath vexed (or 'embittered') my soul (with such severe afflictions); all the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils (so long as I have life continued to me; apparent allusion to Gen. ii. 7), my lips shall not speak wickedness nor my tongue utter deceit (in falsely and contrary to my conscience admitting myself to have been a secret and guilty transgressor). God forbid that I should justify you (in your erroneous reasoning, and your consequent charges against me, by acknowledging myself a wicked man); my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live" (or, "doth not and shall not reproach me for any of my days," as having at any time lived in the practice of secret ungodliness, or for now denying the truth concerning myself).

Job now speaks as victor in the controversy. More solemnly than ever declares his purpose to maintain his innocence, notwithstanding his present treatment. Gives his asseveration the form of an oath—"As God liveth." Here, therefore, the controversy proper between him and his three friends takes end. *Lawful in certain circumstances to appeal to God for the truth of what we affirm, and to confirm a holy righteous resolution by a solemn oath.* So Luther, at the Diet of Worms: "Here I stand; I can do nothing else; so God help me." "An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife."

Job an illustrious example of a man suffering innocently, yet resolutely refusing to utter a single word contrary to his con-

science. Thus confirms the testimony given of him by God Himself. Satan thus defeated and shown to be a lying slanderer in asserting that, if only sufficiently afflicted, Job would renounce his religion—would "curse God to his face." Job thus eminently belonging to "the noble army of martyrs." Would rather still underlie the false accusations of his friends, and suffer as an apparently wicked man the severities of his present distressing condition, than speak or act contrary to the dictates of his conscience, or deny what he knew to be true. Observe—

1. A truly good man will be driven by no sufferings, threatened or endured, absolutely to renounce his religion. Through the weakness of the flesh, extreme torture may force out a recantation, which by the strength of grace will speedily be withdrawn. Cranmer an example—holding over the flames the hand that signed the recantation, and exclaiming: "That unworthy hand!" "Torture me if you will; but whatever the weakness of my nature may force me in my suffering to confess contrary to the truth of Christ, I will recall as soon as the torture is withdrawn."—*An Early Female Martyr to her Persecutors.* The spirit of the martyrs expressed in the language of the three godly youths in Babylon (Dan. iii. 16—18).

2. The part of true piety to wait God's own time for declaring our innocence, and to take no hasty measures for clearing our character or avoiding suffering and reproach. "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. Commit thy way to the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day" (Ps. xxxvii. 5—8).

3. Lawful in certain circumstances strongly to declare the sincerity of our character and the integrity of our life. So Paul before the Sanhedrim: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts xxiii. 1). Our own uprightness to be maintained on such occasions, as due—(1) To God. (2) To our neighbour. (3) To ourselves. Our own righteousness of life valuable—(1) As a fruit of Divine grace and the work of God s Spirit in our hearts. (2) As the evidence of our reconciliation and sonship to God. (3) As an example to our fellow-men. Worthless as the ground of our justification before God. A twofold righteousness belonging to the believer—an imputed, and an inherent or personal one. The latter to be maintained for our justification before men; the former for our justification before God; *viz.*, the righteousness of the man Christ Jesus, our Head and Representative, "the Lord our righteousness" (Is. xlv. 24, 25; Jer. xxiii. 6; Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iii. 20—24). Imputed righteousness to be held fast by a steadfast faith; personal righteousness by holy resolution, dependence on Divine grace, and, if need be, a fearless declaration.

4. Believers so to live that their hearts may not condemn them. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John iii. 21).

5. Job in his suffering from false charges, and in the maintenance of his integrity under them, a type of the Messiah (Isa liii. 8; Acts viii. 33; Isa. l. 5—9).

II. Declares his abhorrence of ungodliness, and his assurance of being one day justified. Verse 7.—"Let mine enemy be as the wicked (or 'mine enemy shall be &c.'), and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous." May be viewed either as in the form of a wish or of a declaration. As the former—strongly expresses his abhorrence of ungodliness. A godless character the worst thing he could wish to his enemy. Thus a form of the assertion of his integrity, without implying any evil wish against his enemies. As the latter—expresses the conviction that the day would come when those who now opposed him would appear to be the guilty party. This conviction ultimately realized, ch. xlii. 7, 8. Observe—

1. Abhorrence of ungodliness to be deeply cherished, and on all due occasions to be boldly declared.

2. Sin to be regarded and avoided as the greatest evil, both to ourselves and others.

3. Certain that God's faithful servants will not always underlie false charges (Isa. lxvi. 5; Rev. iii. 9). A day at hand when "all shall be brought out in their blacks and whites."—*S. Rutherford.*

4. A good man to be careful that his enemies are only the ungodly. A faithful follower of Jesus likely, sooner or later, to have the ungodly for his enemies and calumniators. A woe pronounced on the disciples when all men shall speak well of them; a blessing, when men shall revile them, and speak all manner of evil against them, falsely, for their Master's sake. Christ Himself hated by the world, because He testified of it that its deeds are evil. His followers to imitate His example and partake of His experience (John vii. 7; xv. 18—21; Matt. x. 24, 25).

III. Gives his reasons for his abhorrence of ungodliness and hypocrisy, as well as a proof that his was not such a character (verses 8—10 Four things

not found in a hypocrite or godless person, but which Job possessed—(1) A good hope. (2) A hearing with God. (3) A holy joy in God Himself. (4) A heart always to pray.

1. *The hope of the ungodly, however prosperous in this world, doomed to disappointment.* Verse 8.—"For what is the hope of the hypocrite (or godless person), though he have gained (or, 'when God cuts him off,' as in ch. vi. 9; Is. xxxviii. 12), when God takes away (or draws forth) his soul?" The hope of the prosperous hypocrite doomed to perish. Riches profit not in the day of wrath. The sinner may live to do evil "a hundred times," but must, if impenitent, perish in the end. The rich fool in the Gospel cut off in the midst of his prosperity, and in the height of his hope. Dives taken from his sumptuous table, to cry in hell for a drop of water to cool his tongue. The Saviour's problem for a worldly man,—What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (Matt. xvi. 26). Solon's maxim not far from the truth,—Call no man happy till his death. Observe—(1) Our course of life to be constantly viewed in the light of *eternity* and a *dying* bed.

"Thrones will then be toys,
And earth and skies seem dust upon the scales."

(2) A man is happy according to his *character* rather than his condition. (3) The text an emphatic *testimony to a future life.* But for this, the case of the prosperous wicked might have the best of it. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, then are we of all men most miserable (1 Cor. xv. 19). (4) A prosperous life often suddenly cut short by the stroke of death. Life in God's hands. The thread cut off at His pleasure. (5) The soul of the ungodly man *forced* to quit the body; that of the godly gladly departs from it. The wicked is driven away in his death. Body and soul must part; the question is, how? (6) That hope only worth having that *looks beyond the grave.* "He builds too low that builds beneath the skies." (7) The gain of the world a poor compensation for the loss of the soul. (8) Awful condition for a man to be suddenly called into eternity in the midst of his earthly enjoyments, and *unprepared.*

"How shocking must thy summons be, O death,
To him who is at ease in his possessions!
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come."

(9) Gold able to procure entrance anywhere but into the kingdom of God. (10) True wisdom to ask, What is my hope in the event of a sudden death? Reader, what is yours? Only *faith* in Christ's blood and righteousness, confirmed by a life of *love* towards God and men, the only sure foundation of a good *hope.* Christ our hope. Such hope the anchor of the soul amid the storms of life and "the swellings of Jordan."

2. *The prayer of the ungodly unheard in the time of trouble.* Verse 9—"Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him?" Two questions implied—(1) Will the ungodly pray in time of trouble? (2) Will God hear him if he does? A heart to pray not always found in time of trouble. The spirit to pray a gift from God. *A prayerless life often followed by a prayerless death.* Prayer, even if offered, in time of trouble not always heard (Prov. i. 24—28; Is. i. 15). Acceptable prayer implies both repentance and faith. Both wanting in the prayer of the ungodly and the hypocrite. An acceptable time when God may be found and prayer heard;—and the *contrary.* A time when knocking at mercy's gate will be followed by no opening (Matt. xxv. 11, 12). He who will not pray when he might, perhaps cannot pray when he would, or is unheard when he does. To shut the door of our heart in God's face, is the way to have the door of his heaven shut in ours. Observe—(1) *A time of trouble sure sooner or later to come upon each one.* (2) *To pray in the time of trouble the language of nature.* So the heathen sailors in the ship with Jonah (Jon. i. 5, 6). In ordinary circumstances the Athenians prayed to their false deities, but in public distress to "the unknown God" (3) *The ungodly either not able to pray in time of trouble, or not heard if they do.* (4) *The mark of a hypocrite to pray only when trouble comes upon him.*

3. *The ungodly has no delight in God.* (Verse 10)—"Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" The ungodly would have God's gifts, but not Himself; the godly would rather have God than His gifts. A mark of grace to delight oneself in God. An unholy heart unable to delight in a holy God.

Delight in God.

(1) *A leading part in true piety.* God desires not that we serve Him as a slave, but that we delight in Him as a child.

(2) *God Himself the chief good to an intelligent creature.* Everything in Him for such a creature to delight in. The source and centre of all good. "Of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown." All the beauty, loveliness, and sweetness in the creature, in comparison with what is in God, only a drop compared with the ocean. Not to delight in God is either not to know Him or to be

under the power of a nature that hates Him. They that know Him not only trust but delight in Him. The greatest misery, as well as sin, of an intelligent creature, not to delight in God. Not to delight in God is either to be ignorant of Him, or to declare that we see nothing in Him to delight in. If God, only *as God*, is such as to be supremely delighted in by unfallen intelligent creatures, much more is He, as a God in Christ, to be delighted in by fallen ones.

(3) *God the delight of heaven.* Hence no unregenerate or unholy person able to enter, or find enjoyment there if he could. To delight in God hereafter, we must first learn to delight in Him here.

(4) *Delight in the creature only right when we first delight supremely in God.* Delight in the creature instead of God, not only idolatry but insult.

(5) *A sinner's greatest delight often his greatest sin.* The greater the delight in the creature to the rejection of God, the deeper the idolatry and the fouler the insult.

(6) *A man's character proclaimed by what he delights in.* The sow delights in the mire, the crow in carrion, the cock in the dunghill, and the worm in corruption. The delight of the holy, in God; that of the unholy, in the creature. Important question—*What do I delight in?* God, or the creature?

(7) *Delight in God not affected by outward circumstances.* Often highest when outward circumstances are lowest.

(8) *The mark of a godly man, that, when in deepest affliction, he can delight himself in God.* Job's case. Here apparently appealed to by Him as a proof of the sincerity of his piety.

4. *The prayers of the ungodly are only casual and temporary.* "Will he always call upon God?"

Persevering Prayer.

1. The ungodly man prays in *sickness and trouble*, but not in health and prosperity. Fitful prayers like smoke driven aside by the wind and never reaching the clouds. Answers to prayer often withheld to prove its faith and sincerity. Some pray only in the sunshine, others only in the storm; the believer prays *always*.

2. The ungodly man's prayers *not persevered in.* Prayer, wanting the wings of faith, soon tires and comes to the ground. Prayer proves its sincerity by its continuance. Fallen nature prays; but only grace prays *always*. The hypocrite and unbeliever draws in his hand if not immediately filled. Many lose their prayers by not drawing the bow sufficiently for the discharge of the arrow. Successful prayer a bolt shot up into heaven. The believer stands knocking at God's door, and waiting His own time of opening. Christ taught His disciples always to pray, and not "to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). Answers only promised to persevering prayer. He who prays successfully finds enjoyment in the exercise which brings him back to it. A man's religion which is only by fits and starts wants the stamp of divinity. Prayer, without perseverance, not current at the gate of heaven.

Job able to stand both tests. Prayed both in prosperity and adversity, and *persevered* in his prayers.

IV. Declares his faith in the rectitude of the Divine government.

1. Speak as one *conscious of greater illumination than his pretentious friends.* Verse 11.—"I will teach you by the hand of God (or, concerning God's dealings with men; and what is with the almighty (His purposes and procedure in regard to evil doers) I will not conceal." Observe—*Light given in order to be communicated.* A good man constituted by God himself a teacher of others. Made a light in the world to hold forth the word of life (Phil. ii. 15, 16). Truth not to be concealed from selfish love of ease or slavish fear of consequences.

2. Yet appeals to their own observation, and professes only to communicate facts with which they themselves were already acquainted. Verse 12.—"Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it." His friends had already referred to the facts, but failed to make a right application of them. Their error not in respect to the *facts*, but the *use* of them; not in asserting that hypocrites and oppressors sooner or later suffer the punishment of their sins, but that Job, who was now suffering apparently at the hand of God, must be one of them. Job asserts the fact, but denies the inference. Maintains that all oppressors and bad men, sooner or later, suffer; but denies—(1) That therefore all oppressors and bad men suffer in this life. (2) That all that suffer are oppressors and bad men. Observe—(1) *Hearers themselves to be often appealed to for the truth of what is asserted.* Appeals to the hearers' own observation and experience often the most convincing argument. Hearers frequently do not so much require the knowledge of truths or facts, as the *right use and application of them.* (2) The dealings of Divine Providence open to men's view, and calling for observation and reflection.

3. *Hence reproves them for their vain and useless arguments.* "Why then are ye thus altogether vain?" (or "babble forth such vanities"?) Their vanity—(1) In address-

ing Job as if ignorant of, or absolutely denying, the facts they so much insisted on in regard to the fate of the ungodly. (2) In erroneously arguing from those facts that Job, who suffered so much, must be a bad man. That Job could maintain the facts as decidedly as themselves, a proof—(1) That he was not the wicked man they had represented him to be. (2) That he needed not their instruction on the subject. (3) That they had only been vainly insisting on things which he himself admitted. (4) That they had been one-sided in their views and representations. They had, therefore, poured forth their eloquence, whether original or second-hand, only "as one that beateth the air." (1) Preachers to see that in their discourses they are aiming at a right object, and employing right arguments in support of it. (2) Preachers not to dwell on known and admitted truths without shewing the right use and application of them. Not enough to repeat that all who believe and come to Christ will be saved, but to endeavour to shew *what it is* to believe and come to Him, and *how* people may do so. Not sufficient to insist that Christ died for sinners, but to show how a man obtains a saving interest in His death.

V. Describes the lot of oppressors and of the prosperous ungodly. Verse 13.—"This is the portion of wicked men with God, and the heritage of oppressors which they shall receive of the Almighty." Seems to take up the language of Zophar (ch. xx. 29). Observe—(1) Faith and piety look to the end. (2) Each man's destiny faithfully meted out by the Almighty according to his character and conduct. (3) The main question for a man—what shall I receive at the hands of the Almighty? Man kills the body; but the soul still in God's hands.

The lot of the ungodly described in reference to—

1. Their *children*. Verse 14.—"If his children be multiplied (or become great—a mark of propriety), it is for the sword (or they are doomed to the sword—shall fall in the siege or battle as threatened, Hos. ix. 13), and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread." Misery often entailed on children by their parents' sin, an acknowledged fact. "The seed of evil doers shall never be renowned"—a standing maxim. Children usually serve themselves heirs of their parents' sufferings by practising their parents' sins. Effects of the sins of parents often in this world more visible in the children than in themselves. Proof of a judgment to come and a future life. Effects from parents' sins, suffered by children in this life, may be overruled by a gracious Providence for their benefit in the next. Contrast the text with what is stated of the children of the godly (Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26). Job's children neither perished by the sword nor suffered want of bread. Verse 15.—"Those that remain of him (escaping the sword) shall be buried in death (immediately on their death as in a time of pestilence, or buried by the pestilence as the cause of their death); and his (or their) widows shall not weep" (as in an ordinary case of burial, the want of such funeral lamentation being with Orientals a grievous misfortune—"the burial of an ass," Jer. xxii. 18, 19).

2. Their *possessions*. Verse 16.—"Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment (another form of Oriental riches) as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver." The answer to the question put to the rich fool: "Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 20). The sinner's wages earned to be put into a bag with holes. Himself often snatched away by death when expecting to enjoy his acquired possessions. In the Providence of God a good man often made to reap the benefit of a bad man's gains. Insecurity and transitoriness the characteristics of the prosperous sinner's earthly goods. Verse 18.—"He buildeth his house as the moth (which is easily shaken out of the garment where it has made its nest, and which often devours its own house), and as a booth (or hut) which the keeper [of a vineyard] maketh" (intended only to last for the season, and to be taken down as soon the fruit is gathered).

3. His *person*. He is often—(1) *Carried off by a sudden and unexpected death*. Verse 19.—"The rich man shall lie down [at night on his bed of rest], but he shall not be gathered (or, according to another reading, 'he shall not do so any more,'—he lies down for the last time); he openeth his eyes (or, as quickly as 'one opens one's eyes'—in the twinkling of an eye) and he is not" (is no more in this world, having been carried often by a sudden death during the night). Exemplified in the rich fool of the Gospel, and perhaps forming the foundation of the Saviour's illustration: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke xii. 20). (2) *Seized with sudden fear of approaching judgment*. Verse 20.—"Terrors take hold on him as waters (suddenly overwhelming him like a mountain-torrent rushing down with widespread ruin); a tempest stealeth him away in the night (some judgment carrying him away like a sudden tornado, never dreaming of such an event). The east wind (the most vehement and destructive in Oriental countries) carrieth him away, and

he departeth (no more to be seen), and as a storm hurleth him out of his place (his fancied paradise, where he expected to remain, and long enjoy his accumulated wealth. (3) *Visited with calamity from which he is unable to escape.* Verse 22.—"For God shall cast [His judgments] upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of His hand." Unsparing sin prepares for unsparing judgment. Escape often sought only when too late. "The prudent foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; the foolish passeth on and is punished." "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (4) *Made the object of execration and abhorrence to his fellow-men* Verse 23.—"Men shall clap their hands at him (in abhorrence of his character and joy at his fall), and shall hiss him out of his place" (as an object of execration and a nuisance to society). The most prosperous evil-doer made one day "an abhorrence to all flesh." Some to leave their graves unto everlasting life; some "to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2; Isa. lxvi. 24). Observe—(i.) Power of faith and a good conscience to enable a man, while deeply suffering both outwardly and inwardly, calmly to contemplate and boldly to declare the consequences of a life of sin. (ii.) A godly man, however tried and afflicted, takes the part of God against evil-doers, however prosperous in this world. (iii.) Terrible consequences, sooner or later, to a life of worldliness and ungodliness. (iv.) The tinsel of worldly prosperity to be one day stripped off from the godless possessor of it. (v.) Awful madness to peril the destinies of eternity for the momentary pleasures of time.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JOB'S DESCANT ON TRUE WISDOM.

The place occupied by this chapter one peculiar to itself. Its connection with the preceding or succeeding portions of the book by no means obvious. Appears scarcely to form a part of the dialogue. Seems, as it stands before us, to have been delivered by Job during a lull in the controversy. Forms a poetical descant on the praises of true wisdom. Job left alone in the field, and now in a much calmer mood, in circumstances to enter on such a subject. Perhaps led to it by what he had stated in the preceding chapter in regard to the wicked, as well as by his own affliction and the inabiltiy of his friends and himself to account for it. Strongly expresses his approbation of true piety, and so affirms his own character. Himself an exemplification of his own definition of true wisdom. That definition the character secretly given him by God, and which Job was resolved at all hazards to hold fast. The section thus appears to be introduced by the author to give prominence to Job's real character. Probably indicates the author's design in the book to give an exhibition of the nature of true wisdom. Has a special importance in connecting the book with other parts of Scripture, especially with the writings of David and Solomon, and the wise men of that period (1 Kings iv. 30, 31), and, in the New Testament, with those especially of Paul and James (1 Cor. xiii.; James i. 3). Its similarity to passages in the Proverbs at once obvious, especially to chapters i., iii., viii. The last verse of the section, which gives the key of the whole, almost an echo of Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; and Prov. ix. 10. Perhaps an indication thus afforded of the period of the composition of the book, as one when the attention of thoughtful pious men was especially directed to the subject of true wisdom. The section exhibits—(1) The inability of man, by his own unaided powers, either to discover or acquire true wisdom. (2) The supreme excellence of that wisdom. (3) Its origin and discovery with God Himself, the Creator of all things. (4) Its nature, as consisting of true piety—the fear of God and the consequent departing from all evil.

This chapter, the oldest and finest piece of natural history in the world (*Adam Clarke*). Indicates Job to have lived in a period of considerable advancement in civilization.—*Barnes.*

True Wisdom.

I. Man unable, by his own unaided powers, either to discover or acquire it.

Wisdom not to be discovered or obtained like metals or gems. These hid in the bowels of the earth, but discovered and obtained by human art and industry. (Verse 1)—"Surely (or, 'for indeed' the speaker being about to show the rarity and excellence of true wisdom as contrasted with what he had said of the prosperous ungodly) there is a vein (or 'outlet,' *Margin*, 'mine') for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it" (or, "which they smelt," to render it fit for the purposes of life). Gold formerly found in Arabia. Abundant in Judæa in the time of Solomon (1 Kings x. 12, 14, 15). The art of extracting and refining it learned at an early period of the world. Mortals soon became metallaries. *Trapp.* The discovery and earliest manu-

facture of metals apparently ascribed to the descendants of Cain (Gen. iv. 22). The search for gold and silver poetically ascribed by Milton to the suggestion of Mammon, a fallen angel whose name denotes "riches:"

"By him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransack'd the centre, and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother earth,
For treasures better hid."

According to Pliny, gold first found by Cadmus, the Phœnician. According to Herodotus, first coined into money by the Syrians. Verse 2.—"Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass (or 'copper') is molten out of [and so separated from] the stone. He (the miner or metallurgist, in searching for and producing these metals from the earth) setteth an end to darkness [by sinking shafts, and, with the aid of torches, exploring mines], and searcheth out all perfection (or, 'searcheth out with the utmost thoroughness') the stones of darkness (lying hid beneath the earth's surface), and the shadow of death" (or places of deepest darkness). Tubal-Cain, probably identical with the Vulcan of Greek and Roman mythology, represented by Moses as the first artificer in brass and iron (Gen. iv. 22). The Chalybes, or Cyclops, said by Pliny to be the discoverers and earliest workers of these metals. Brass and iron said by Moses to be found in the rocky mountains of Palestine (Deut. viii. 9). Iron appointed by Lycurgus to be used by the Spartans for money instead of gold, to prevent its accumulation. Verse 4.—"The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant (or, 'he' [the miner] openeth a channel or shaft away from the habitations of men,—or, 'from the foot of the mountain'); even the waters forgotten of the foot (or, 'the men forgotten of the foot,' *i.e.*, descending to places in the mine untrodden by human or any other feet,—nothing in the Hebrew text either for waters or men): they are dried up, they are gone away from men (or, 'they [the miners] are suspended,' *viz.*, by ropes from the mouth of the mine; 'they swing away from men' [who remain above on the surface]). As for the earth, out of it cometh bread (or bread-corn), and under it (or 'underneath,' or 'its lower parts') is turned up as it were fire (combustible materials, as sulphur, bitumen, naphtha, coal (Gen. xiv. 10); or perhaps precious stones glowing like fire (Ezek. xxviii. 14). Note—Underground warmth, boiling springs, and red-hot mud, are believed to prove that fire still exists within the globe.—"The stones of it are the place (or bed) of sapphires, and it hath [belonging to it] the dust of gold" ('clods or lumps of gold'—*Margin*, 'gold ore'). There is (or 'it is,' *viz.* the mine) a path which no fowl [however keen-sighted] knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. The lion's whelps (or, 'the proud wild beasts,' in their search for prey) have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it" [being deep below the surface of the earth]. Yet even there man's skill and enterprise find a way. Verse 9.—"He [the miner] putteth forth his hand upon the rock (*Heb.*, 'the flinty rock,' *viz.* with a view to its excavation); he overturneth the mountains by the roots [by means of wedges and hammers, acid liquids, or, as in more modern times, by gunpowder—overcoming every obstacle that stands in his way]. He cutteth out rivers (or 'channels') among the rocks [in searching for the precious metals or still more precious gems]; and his eye [with the aid of torches] seeth every precious thing [whether metal or gem, contained in those dark recesses]. He bindeth the floods from overflowing (stops or dams up the water to prevent them from trickling and overflowing the mine); and the thing that is hid (the metals or gems he is in quest of) bringeth he forth to light." Observe—

1. *The remarkable provision of Divine goodness and wisdom in making the earth itself a storehouse of substances that should contribute so largely to the comfort, gratification, and improvement of the human race.* For example, iron and coal, not to speak of gold, silver, and precious stones. Beds of coal, many feet thick, and extending over an area of many hundreds of miles, stored up far below the earth's surface. These beds the remains of ancient forests, and the result of changes on what was the earth's surface many thousand years ago. Iron, so important for man's use and progress in the arts of civilized life, largely embedded in rocks, slowly formed thousands of years before man was upon the earth. Remarkable, too, that as these beds of iron-stone required fire both for the extraction and working of the metal, they are generally found in close proximity to beds of coal, as well as to sulphur which facilitates its production.

2. *Man's art and industry necessary to the acquisition and use of those materials which God has stored up in the earth for his benefit.* Man intended for work, and so to be a kind of fellow-worker with his Creator. The materials provided for him by God, but, in order to his enjoyment and use of them, requiring to be discovered, obtained, and elaborated by himself through the intellect with which God has endowed him. Man not only to exercise his art and industry on the productions of the earth's surface in order to obtain his daily food, but also on what lies

beneath it for the purposes of civilized life. In the one case, as well as the other, man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow.

3. *Remarkable adaptation between the productions and contents of the earth, and the faculties given to man for their discovery and use.* Faculties bestowed on man to fit him for subduing the earth and turning its treasures to his advantage. The art and industry of the miner and metallurgist from the same Creator as the minerals on which he works. The ant operates on his little hill; the bee on its comb; the beaver on his dam: man on the earth itself, with all that it contains. "His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him" (Isaiah xxviii. 26). Human intelligence and skill a faint reflection of that wisdom with which God made the world, and part of that Divine image in which man was created. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isaiah xxviii. 29).

4. *Man's industry in searching for the precious metals an example of the earnestness and perseverance with which he should seek for the better and more enduring riches.* Treasures exist for man, compared with which all earthly possessions are but as the dust of the balance. Heavenly wisdom, in which are durable riches and unending happiness, to be sought for as silver, and to be searched for as for hid treasures (Prov. ii. 4). The earnestness of the miner, with much less toil, under the direction afforded by the Gospel, sufficient to put a man in speedy possession of gold which no thief can steal, and of which not even death itself can deprive him. Eternal riches close at hand wherever the Gospel is revealed, and awaiting only the humble and earnest seeker (Rev. iii. 18; Matt. xiii. 44).

II. The supreme value and excellence of true wisdom. Verses 12—19.—"But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding [where it may be found like gold and silver]? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living (not only not to be discovered by the highest human intellect, but not to be purchased with anything on earth). The depth (or abyss—waters under the earth—perhaps the ocean with its 'deep unfathomed caves') saith, It is not in me; and the sea (waters on the earth's surface) saith, It is not with me (nothing in either one or the other able either to discover it to man or afford him a price to buy it with). Note—The ocean's bed covered for hundreds of miles with beautiful seaweeds, and with submarine forests and jungles thronged with living beings. "It cannot be gotten for gold (the most precious and pure, 1 Kings vi. 20, 21): neither shall silver be weighed (as in ancient times, Gen. xxiii. 16) for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir (stamped gold, or the golden wedge or ingot from the place most distinguished for its production), with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal (or vases of crystal and gold) cannot equal it; and the exchange (or barter of it, according to the ancient mode of traffic) shall not be for jewels of fine gold (vessels or ornaments of pure and massive gold, such as have been recently discovered in the coffin of an Egyptian princess living in the time of Joseph, nearly four thousand years ago). No mention shall be made of coral (some costly gem or natural production—long uncertain what), or of pearls (always held in highest esteem among men, Matt. xiii. 45, 46); for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it; neither shall it be valued with pure gold." Gold so abundant in Job's time and country, and so variously employed, that five kinds or forms of it are mentioned in these few verses.

Similar language to that of the text in reference to the excellence and preciousness of true wisdom, found in Prov. iii. 13—15; iv. 7; viii. 10, 11, 18, 19. That exhibited in various particulars by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, which is only asserted by the author of Job. (Compare Prov. iii. 16—18; iv. 5—9; viii. 20, 21, 35). The superiority of Divine wisdom or true piety over all earthly treasures evinced—

1. In its *intrinsic excellence.* Other treasures only material, and of the earth; this spiritual—a thing of the soul—as much excelling material treasures as spirit excels matter, and as moral and spiritual beauty excels material. Gems and gold adorn the body, wisdom and piety the soul. Those beautiful and attractive to the eye of sense; these to the spiritual eye, both of God, angels, and holy men. True wisdom, or the fear of God, assimilates us to God Himself, the source and model of wisdom, "the only wise God." That which mainly constitutes the Divine image in us (Prov. iii. 19, 20; viii. 22—31; Col. iii. 10). Allies us to all holy beings, the unfallen intelligences of heaven. Is to man what creative and providential wisdom is to God. Prepares us for correct, satisfying, and ever-increasing knowledge of God and of His ways and works. Purifies the heart, sanctifies the will, and enlightens the understanding.

2. In its *ability to afford true and solid happiness.* Other treasures only gratify the senses, or furnish the means of gratifying them. This gives peace and satisfaction to the soul. Other things unable to repel

sickness and trouble, or to give solace under them. This acts like oil on the troubled waters. Divine wisdom like the voice of Jesus to the winds and waves: Peace be still. Her ways pleasantness and her paths peace. Delivers from the disturbing and destructive tyranny of the passions. Secures enjoyment of the Divine favour, which is life. Wisdom is a tree of life to every one who lays hold of her. Gives health to the soul, and even contributes to that of the body. Profitable to all things, having the promise both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

3. In its *endless durability*. All earthly treasures perishable. Gold and gems soon cease to delight. At most only follow us to the grave. Unable, except as rightly used, to further our interests or promote our happiness in another world. Wisdom or true piety not only accompanies its possessor to the grave, but beyond it. The greatest of the noble triad—faith, hope, and charity. Faith ultimately changed into sight, and hope into enjoyment; charity or love, another name for wisdom, lives on and never dies A cut rather than a comfort in the words of Abraham and Dives—"Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Sad when our good things must end with our life. The excellence of heavenly wisdom that it not only gives solid peace here, but prepares us for eternal joy hereafter. Wisdom not only accompanies her children through the chilly waves of death, but takes them by the hand on the other side, and introduces them into the presence of God and the Lamb, who is wisdom itself. True wisdom, like its Author and Archetype, everlasting.

III. God Himself the author and revealer of true wisdom (verses 20—28). "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living (or of every beast or animal), and kept close from the fowls of the air (referring to verses 7 and 8). Destruction and death (the regions of the dead or under-world, or those inhabiting it) say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears" (only *heard* of it, as neither possessing it themselves nor able to communicate it to others, but as if approaching nearer to the knowledge of it, men often having their eyes opened only when it is too late, and regretting the loss of past opportunities for obtaining the knowledge and possession of true wisdom, Prov. v. 11—14). Observe—(1) *That of which earlier generations only heard the report, now clearly revealed.* (2) *Sad to be only hearing the fame of a good thing which can make us happy, and to be unable to obtain it.* The case of the lost in another world; happily not the case of those in this. The rich man in hell "*saw* Abraham *afar off*, and Lazarus in his bosom," but was unable to reach him. Verse 23.—"God understandeth the way thereof (how it is to be obtained), and He knoweth the place thereof (where it is to be found and in what it consists). For He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven" (penetrating the universe with one glance of His omniscient eye; therefore able to instruct man as to true wisdom,—what is his highest interest, and the way to secure it). God, however, not only omniscient and surveying all things, but the all-wise creator and disposer of universal nature, and as such the fountain and model of wisdom to His intelligent creatures. For the same thought see Prov. iii. 13—20; viii. 11—29. Divine wisdom displayed in establishing the universe with all its mysterious laws and forces, assigning to each department of nature its bounds and operations. Verse 25.—"To make (while making or about to make) the weight for the winds (giving due weight to the atmospheric air when at rest—fifteen pounds of it pressing on every square inch of the earth's surface—as well as proper momentum to it when in motion in the form of wind, through the earth's motion on its axis, and more especially through the rarefaction of some parts of it by the sun's heat, and the rushing in of colder parts to take their place; so as to be not only not hurtful and destructive to the earth's inhabitants, but in many respects highly beneficial to them); and He weigheth the waters by measure" (having at creation assigned their respective quantities to land and water, so that there should be sufficient of the latter for the irrigation of the former, as also to the waters on the earth, and those suspended in the atmosphere, whether as clouds or invisible vapour). Observe—(1) *All things in nature arranged in exact measure and proportion*, of which chemistry affords an interesting example. (2) *As winds and waters, so also trials and afflictions are measured* (Isa. xxvii. 8). Verse 26.—"When he made a decree for the rain (constituting those natural laws by which it should be formed from the vapour exhaled from land and sea, and should descend in showers according to the earth's requirements), and a way for the lightning of the thunder (or the lightning which precedes the thunder; how it should be produced as the electric flash which proceeds from the clouds, when, to restore the equilibrium, the superabundant electricity discharges itself in passing from one cloud to another, causing the thunder to follow it, as the report of a gun

follows the flash, by the particles of the rent atmosphere suddenly striking together again —electricity, of which that flash is the expression, being one of the most mysterious forces in nature). Then (even when at the creation He prescribed the laws by which external nature was to be governed) did he see it (contemplate this wisdom in its excellence and suitability for man's welfare and happiness), and declare it (*Margin*, 'number it,' as carefully considering its nature and results,—take an exact survey of it, noting it as it were in a book for future communication); he prepared it (set it before him for contemplation, or established it as what should constitute man's true wisdom), yea, and searched it out (examined it fully in all its properties and bearings,—actions ascribed to God in condescension to our capacity, in order to indicate the excellence and importance of the thing spoken of). And unto man [as that work of His hands in whom the image of His own essential wisdom was to be reflected] he said [on the day of his creation, either speaking by an external voice or writing it internally on his conscience, in order that he might know wherein his true interest lay, and what was the true wisdom for him as a moral and intelligent creature], Behold, the fear of the Lord [not the proud self-sufficient scrutiny, or even the mere intellectual study, of the Divine operations, whether in creation or providence], that is wisdom [the wisdom for him, as a finite but moral and intelligent creature]; and to depart from evil [not the knowledge or examination of my secret purposes in dealing thus or thus with any of my creatures] is understanding" [that fear of the Lord and departing from evil being at the same time the best way by which he will come to know and understand why I act as I do in my providential dispensations]. This emphatic, cardinal, and ever-outstanding statement introduced with a "Behold," as indicating—(1) The importance of it. (2) The unlikeness of it to what proud man might himself have conceived. (3) The backwardness of man to believe, learn, and embrace it. Observe—

1. *All nature under laws prescribed by God Himself.* Nature itself God's work. The universe, with all its laws, only the material expression of His being and attributes. Every part formed and placed by Him in exact fitness to each other, and to the whole. Those laws established by Him at the first in infinite wisdom, and preserved in their operation according to His own will and for His own purposes. God's kingdom a kingdom of settled law; not of chance or caprice. Hence the comfort and confidence of His intelligent creatures. Men not afflicted capriciously, but in wisdom. The execution as well as constitution of natural laws with God Himself, who may suspend or contravene them for His own purposes as He pleases.

2. *Man enabled to penetrate far into the secrets of nature and the facts of the universe, but unable of himself to discover true wisdom.* The greatest philosophers of antiquity in the dark in regard to it. Professing themselves wise, they became fools. Man, like the mole, does all his works underground (*Epiphanius*). Homer called all-wise, and said to know all things human. Aristotle, for his soaring wisdom, called an eagle fallen from the clouds. Yet the greatest of Grecian sages professed they wanted other lights, and took it for granted the time would come when God would impart a further revelation of His will to mankind.

"The first and wisest of them all (Socrates) profess'd
To know this only, that he nothing knew;
The next (Plato) to fabling fell and smooth conceits;
A third sort (Pyrrho) doubted all things, though plain sense;
Others (Aristotle) in virtue placed felicity,
But virtue joined with riches and long life;
In corporal pleasures he (Epicurus), and careless ease;
The Stoic last, in philosophic pride,
By him called virtue; and his virtuous man,
Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing,
Equal to God, oft shames not to prefer,
As fearing God nor man."
Paradise Regained, Book iv.

Jerome said to have known all that was knowable, yet one of the most devoted students of revelation. The greatest philosophers in our own or any other country, as Newton, Faraday, and Brewster, have loved to sit with the humility of a child at the feet of Jesus, to learn wisdom out of the Scriptures of truth.

3. *God alone able to inform man as to his true interests.* One of the great problems among the sages of antiquity, wherein lies man's chief good. A question naturally occurring to thinking men. God answers it for man: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good" (Micah vi. 8). As great diversity of opinion among ancient sages about wisdom as about the chief good. With those of Chaldæa, it was the study of the starry firmament and its interpretation as declarative of the events of Providence; with those of Arabia, that of the designs of God in His dealings with men and the whole system of the Divine government; with those of Egypt, the origin of the universe; with those of Greece and Rome, the nature of the Deity, with the problems of their own

existence and of the universe around them. Such speculations, apart from revealed truth, represented by Milton as the employment, perhaps in part the punishment, of some of the fallen angels.

"Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute;
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
Of good and evil much they argued then,
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame;
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy."

In opposition to all this, God Himself declares what is the true wisdom for man,—the fear of the Lord, and as its consequence, to depart from evil. This prescribed by God to man in the exercise of His own infinite wisdom as Creator and Governor of the universe. Made the law for man by Him who gave laws to universal nature, and at the time that He did so. A wisdom that is "earthly, sensual, devilish." True wisdom from above,—the gift of "the Father of lights." "The law (or revealed will) of the Lord maketh wise the simple." The Scriptures able to make men "wise unto salvation." The Gospel of Christ "the hidden wisdom." Christ Himself the "wisdom of God" and the "light of the world." Whoever follows Him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Christ the teacher come from God. Anoints with eye-salve the eyes of the spiritually blind, "that they may see." Gives "the unction of the Holy One," that we know all things. Nature, in all its departments, tells of a God, but not how to obtain His favour and forgiveness. Christ reveals both in His Word. Himself, as the Son of God, eternal wisdom; as the Son of Man, incarnate wisdom; and "of God is made wisdom" to all who are "in Him" (1 Cor. i. 24, 30; Prov. viii. 12—36).

IV. The nature of true wisdom. Verse 28.—"The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." The gold and the silver, the sapphire and the ruby, have their place in the bowels of the earth. Wisdom has *its* place in the "fear of the Lord" and the "departing from evil." The one the root, the other the stem and the branches. The former the spring, the latter the streams issuing from it.

1. *The "fear of the Lord"* (*Heb.* 'Adonai,' denoting 'lord' or 'governor,'—usually applied to the Messiah, and by the Jews substituted for Jehovah) *the first part of true wisdom.* That fear not a slavish, but a filial one. A reverential feeling and conduct as much allied to love as fear. The fear rather of a child in regard to a beloved parent, than of a slave in regard to a dreaded master. When genuine, always combined, if not identical, with love. Love as directed to a superior, especially to the Supreme Being. A feeling and deportment due from an intelligent creature to his Creator—a being at once of unbounded goodness, infinite excellence, supreme majesty, and almighty power. A fear that shudders at offending, not so much from the dread of punishment as from an inward consciousness of, and love to, what is right. A principle originally implanted in man as the law of his being. Obedience to it his wisdom and interest. The violation of it his ruin. Actually violated and cast off at the Fall. Now universally violated by fallen humanity. Its violation the cause of all the misery in the world. Its observance the harmony of the soul, the harmony of man with man, and the harmony of man with his Maker. May be re-implanted in man's breast. Its re-implanting the object of the Saviour's mission, and the effect of the Holy Spirit's grace in the soul (Jer. xxxii. 40).

2. *To "depart from evil" the second part of true wisdom.* Moral evil, or sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates (Jer. xliv. 4). To be departed from—(1) As contrary to the nature and will of our Creator. (2) As opposed to our own interest and happiness. All sin the opposite of God's character which is goodness, purity, and holiness. Moral evil the necessary source of all physical and social evil. The fear of the Lord necessarily evinced by, and conducting to, a departure from evil. The two combined constitute the perfect man. Job's own character (ch. i. 1, 8). Evil to be departed from—(1) Earnestly. (2) Entirely. (3) Perseveringly. (4) At all hazards. Moral evil both internal and external—both in heart and life. Both to be equally departed from. Departure from evil necessarily connected with the practice of good. The only way for a fallen man to depart from evil is by the implantation of a new nature through the operation of God's Spirit in the heart. Hence the promise (Jer. xxiv. 7; xxxii. 39; Ezek. xi. 19; xxxvi. 26, 27).

3. *The fear of God or true religion the wisdom of man.* Wisdom the choice of the best end, and employment of the best means for attaining it. True religion both aims at and secures glory to God and our own best interests. Seeks and secures the chief end

for which man was made—to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. The only means of man's happiness, either here or hereafter. Godliness favourable both to his physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal, welfare. Has the promise both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The way to make the best of both worlds. Gives much in the hand, more in the hope. Is in harmony with man's moral nature given him by his Creator. The foundation of personal and domestic, social and civil, peace. Fits for the enjoyment of the Divine fellowship—man's highest happiness. Smooths the pillow of death. Prepares for a happy eternity beyond the grave. Preserves him from many troubles, and enables him calmly to meet and patiently to endure those that are unavoidable. Allies him with the noblest and choicest of God's intelligent creatures. Opens to him an ever-brightening path of excellence and delight. Renders him a blessing to others and a fellow-worker with God.

4. *Lay testimonies from Statesmen, Philosophers, and Poets, to the value of true religion in promoting men's best interests.*

"That *summum bonum* which is only able to make thee happy, as well as in thy death as in thy life; I mean the true knowledge and worship of thy Creator and Redeemer, without which all other things are vain and miserable."—*Lord Burleigh to his Son.*

"I have lived to see five sovereigns, and have been privy councillor to four of them; I have seen the most remarkable things in foreign parts, and have been present at most state transactions for the last thirty years; and I have learned, after so many years' experience, that seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the best estate."—*Sir John Mason: died* 1566.

"Love my memory, cherish my friends, but, above all, govern your will and affections by the will and Word of your Creator; in me beholding the end of this world with all her vanities."—*Sir Philip Sidney to his Brother*, 1586.

"Love God, and begin betimes. In Him you shall find everlasting and endless comfort; when you have travelled and wearied yourself with all sorts of worldly cogitations, you shall sit down by sorrow in the end."—*Sir Walter Raleigh to his Wife, before his execution*, 1618.

"Living in an age of extraordinary events and revolutions, I have learned from thence this truth, which I desire might thus be communicated to posterity: that all is vanity which is not honest, and that there is no solid wisdom but in real piety."—*John Evelyn—Epitaph by Himself*, 1706.

"Depend upon this truth, that every man is the worse looked upon, and the less trusted, for being thought to have no religion, in spite of all the pompous, specious epithets he may assume, of *esprits forts*, free-thinker, or moral philosopher; and a wise atheist, if such thing there is, would, for his own interest and character in this world, pretend to some religion."—*Lord Chesterfield—Letters to his Son.*

"Philosophy may infuse stubbornness, but religion only can give patience."—*Dr. S. Johnson.*

"Hold fast, therefore, by this sheet anchor of happiness, religion. You will often want it in the times of most danger—the storms and tempests of life. Cherish true religion as preciously as you would fly with abhorrence and contempt from superstition and enthusiasm. The first is the perfection and glory of human nature; the two last the depravation and disgrace of it. Remember, the essence of religion is a heart void of offence towards God and man; not subtle, speculative opinions, but an active vital principle of faith."—*Lord Chatham—Letters to his Nephew.*

"To religion, then, we must hold in every circumstance of life for our truest comforts; for, if we are already happy, it is a pleasure to think that we can make that happiness unending; and if we are miserable, it is very consoling to think there is a place of rest. Thus, to the fortunate, religion holds out a continuance of bliss; to the wretched, a change from pain."—*Oliver Goldsmith.*

"We know, and, what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort."—*Edmund Burke, on the French Revolution.*

"With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself as having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. . . . I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness, superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot, I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mutual enjoyment, a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave."—*Robert Burns.*

"Where there is most love of God, there will be the truest and most enlarged philanthropy. No other foundation is secure. There is no other means whereby nations can be reformed, than that by which alone individuals can be regenerated. . . . While men are subject to disease, infirmity, affliction, and death, the good never will exist without the hopes of religion; the wicked never without its fears."—*Southey.*

"I envy no quality of the mind or intellect in others; not genius, wit, or fancy. But if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing. For it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay and the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all rights; awakens life even in death; and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument of torture and of shame the ladder of ascent to paradise."—*Sir Humphrey Davy.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOB'S RETROSPECT.

Takes a calm retrospective view of his past experience and life. Thus disproves the suspicions and accusations of his friends, and shows that his complaints were sufficiently well-grounded. The character secretly given him by God thus affirmed out of his own mouth. Does this not from a feeling of vanity and pride, but, like Paul, as compelled to it, for self-vindication. Probably resumes his speech (verse 1, "continued his parable") after pausing for a reply which was not forthcoming.

Commences in a tone of lamentation as he looks back upon his former happiness and prosperity, now apparently for ever fled. Verse 2.—"O that I were," &c. Natural to look back with regret from a state of protracted suffering and depression to one of happiness and comfort, and to long, however vainly, for its return. The believer, in a state of spiritual darkness under the loss of God's sensible presence, often unable to refrain from similar language. "How sweet the hours I once enjoyed." &c. *Better and safer to long for the return of spiritual than of temporal prosperity and comfort.*

I. Job's past happiness (verses 2—11). Embraced—

1. *His enjoyment of the Divine favour and fellowship.* Verse 2—4.—"O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me! when His candle (or lamp—symbol of favour and blessing, chap. xviii. 6; Psa. xviii. 28; cxxxii. 17) shined upon (or over) my head (the lamp in Arab tents and dwellings being usually suspended from the top or ceiling, and kept burning all night), and when by his light I walked through darkness" (by his protection and guidance escaping dangers, and overcoming difficulties and trials—like the caravans travelling through the desert by night with lights burning in their front). Note—*All a believer's present comfort and blessing only candle-light compared with the future.*—"As I was in the days of my youth (or full prosperity; *Heb.*, 'My autumn,' the time of ripe fruits; the reference to his circumstances rather than to his age), when the secret (or intimate friendship) of God was upon (or in) my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me" (present with me, or on my side; or, "when my vigour," &c., the clause in this case belonging rather to the next head). Observe—(1) *No blessing so great or enjoyment so sweet, as that of communion with God and the friendship of our Maker.* These placed by Job at the head of his list of mercies and the retrospect of his happiness. The madness of the world seen in neglecting and despising this. True wisdom in making the enjoyment of it our first concern. Its re-enjoyment by man the object of Christ's mission into the world. (2). *The favour of God the fountain of all real blessing and true happiness.* "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich," &c. (3) *Intimate fellowship and personal friendship with God to be enjoyed in this life.* Abraham the friend of God. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17). Henceforth I call you not servants but friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). "The Lord God will do nothing; but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant" (Psa. xxv. 14, Prov. iii. 32). (4) *God's presence and favour sweeten every blessing.*

> "Happy who walks with Him! Whom what he finds
> Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
> Or what he views of beautiful or grand
> In nature, from the broad majestic oak
> To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
> Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
> His presence who made all so fair, perceiv'd,
> Makes all still fairer. As with Him no scene
> Is dreary, so with Him all seasons please."

2. *His enjoyment of outward mercies* (verses 5—11). These were—(1) *Domestic comfort.* Verse 5.—"When my children (perhaps including servants) were about me." Job's

children now dead, and his servants partly killed (ch. i. 15, 17), and partly fleeing from him in his affliction (chap. xix. 15, 16). Job's home once a snug and well-feathered nest, with an abundant brood of happy young ones in it (verse 18). Mentions his family before his fortune. A happy home a greater treasure than a wide domain. A healthy and happy family one of the greatest of earthly comforts. A home, when what it ought to be—the sweetner of life. Mercifully preserved to man after the Fall. Domestic happiness impaired by sin. Restored by grace. Realized in the enjoyment of God's favour and blessing in Christ (Psa. cxvii. 15). Job's home a happy one, because a holy one (chap i. 5). "Blest, that home where God is felt."—(2) *Outward prosperity.* Verses 6, 19, 20.—"When I washed my steps with butter (cream, or thick milk), and the rock poured me out rivers of oil" (*Heb.* "poured out, &c., with me," *i.e.*, alongside of me, wherever I went—like the rock that followed Israel with its refreshing stream all through the desert). Abundance of milk and oil Oriental emblems of plenty (Deut. xxxii. 13, 14). Canaan a land flowing with milk and honey. Rocky land, as in Arabia and Syria, most favourable for the cultivation of the olive. Oil a great part of Oriental produce. Verse 19—"My root was spread out by the waters (imbibing their moisture, as Psalm i 3) and the dew (abundant in the East, and compensating for the scarcity of rain) lay all night upon my branch (or crops,—thus nourished both above and beneath the soil). My glory (reputation for wisdom, piety and justice; or simply, my prosperous estate) was ne in me (*Heb.*, 'with me,' always new, like a flourishing evergreen), and my bow was renewed in my hand" (my strength always renewing itself after exhaustion, and acquiring fresh vigour (Is. xl. 31), as a bow, after shooting its arrow, returns to its former position and strength). — Observe — (1) Job's riches ascribed by him to God's blessing. The lamp of God's favour was over his head before the rocks poured out oil at his feet. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich." "The Lord giveth thee power to get wealth." (2) Riches a blessing when *from* God, *with* God, and *to* God. "When rich I enjoyed God in all; now when poor, I enjoy all in God."

3. *Public honour I respect.* Verses 7—11, 21—25—"When I went out—(from his residence which was probably in the country) to the gate through the city (or 'up to the city,'—Oriental cities being usually on an eminence, and the city-gate the place of justice, deliberation and business, Ruth iv. 12; Prov. xxxi. 23); when I prepared my seat—(sending his servant before with his cushion, according to Oriental manners, to spread it for him) in the street (or broad open space in front of the gate, used both for court and market, such as is found in the remains of Persepolis and Nineveh, and still exists in eastern cities). The young men (in the forum or market-place) saw me and hid themselves (from modesty and reverence retiring back out of immediate sight); the aged men (the elders of the city composing the court or senate—Ruth iv. 2; Prov. xxxi 23) arose and stood up (from respect, as to one of superior wisdom and standing). The princes (sheikhs, or chiefs of their tribes) refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth (a token of silence and expression of the greatest deference). The nobles (men of wealth and position in the country) held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me [while addressing the assembly], then it blessed me—(pronounced him blessed for the wisdom, justice, and benevolence that shone in his speech); when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me [as the friend and benefactor of my country and my race]. Verse 21—"Unto me men gave ear (listening to my opinion or counsel) and waited; and kept silence at my counsel (having nothing either to add, correct, or gainsay). After my words they spake not again (not even replying, much less contradicting, —satisfied with the wisdom of what had been advanced); and my speech dropped upon them (as the dew, easy-flowing, pleasant and beneficial, Deut. xxxii. 2). And they waited for me as [the parched earth waits] for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as [the earth does] for the latter rain" (the rain in those eastern countries falling at two seasons in the year; the former rain in September or October, the latter rain in February or March). Note—Salutary instruction frequently represented in Scripture and Oriental poetry under the figure of rain and dew. Copious rain or dew the Egyptian hieroglyphic for learning and instruction. Ver. 24—"If I laughed (or smiled) on them (relaxing my gravity, and showing a token of pleasure or recognition), they believed it not (as too great an honour; or, 'did not thereby become bold and familiar'); and the light (smile or serenity) of my countenance they cast not down—(grieving or displeasing him by their undutiful or disrespectful behaviour). I chose out their way (as their counsellor and guide; or, '[If] I joined their society'), and sat chief (occupied the first place, and presided in all their public deliberations), and dwelt [in my settled residence] as a king (or, 'a very king') in the army (or 'troop,' in whom his presence inspires life and

courage, and to whom his word is law), as one that comforteth the mourners" [who hang upon his lips, and drink in his every word]. Observe—(1) *Goodness often the shortest as well as the safest way to greatness.* God's standing promise,—"Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30). In wisdom's left hand—only her *left* hand—are riches and honour. (2) *A good man sure, sooner or later, to gain the esteem and confidence of his fellows.* A wise head, a warm heart, and a willing hand likely to secure love and respect. Christ's promise,—"He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37). Job, from his piety, benevolence, and wisdom, both the darling and the oracle of his country. (3) A man's noblest ambition—(i.) To excel others in virtue, piety, and benevolence. (ii.) To act as the counsellor and guide of his fellows. (iii.) To comfort the mourners while commanding the multitude.

II. Job's character (verses 11—17). His reputation not without just grounds. The fruit not of his riches or power, but of his benevolent and upright character.

1. *His benevolence and compassion as a private individual.* Verses 11, 13, 15, 16.—"Because I delivered the poor that cried [under suffering or oppression], and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish [from want or oppression] came upon me [as his deliverer], and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by comforting, relieving, or delivering her). I was eyes to the blind (as an instructor, counsellor, and guide to the ignorant, inexperienced, and erring), and feet was I to the lame (doing for the weak, infirm, and helpless, what they were unable to do for themselves). I was a father to the poor (counselling, defending, and providing for them); and the cause which I knew not (or, 'the cause of those I knew not,' *i.e.*, of the stranger), I searched out (or into, in order to his relief and defence—doing this as well in the capacity of a private individual as of a magistrate or judge). Observe—(1) Job's religion not one of mere contemplation, still less one of mere profession or outward observance. His the "pure and undefiled religion before God the Father—to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James ii. 27). (2) Job's character an exemplification of "the wisdom that is from above—first pure, then peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and of good fruits." (3) In Job, the fear of God evinced by active love to man. To be so always.

"First daughter to the love of God
Is charity to man."

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20). (4) The nature of that love which the law requires, and which verifies a man's religion. A love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John iii. 18). True charity is kind and seeketh not her own (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5). (5) Job's faith, like Abraham's, made perfect by his works (James ii. 22). (6) Wealth and high position no hindrance to the exercise of compassion and benevolence. Should rather be a help to it.

2. *His faithfulness and justice as a magistrate.* Verses 13, 14.—"The cause which I knew not I searched out (careful—(1) that before giving sentence, he thoroughly understood the case; (2) That none, even the stranger, should have his case neglected). I put on righteousness—(practising it in his daily conduct, and especially as a magistrate and judge), and it clothed me (or, 'put on me,'—wholly filled me, made me righteous,—both without and within). My judgment (or upright dealing) was [to me] as a robe and a diadem" (or turban, worn as a headdress by kings and nobles, Is. lxii. 3; by the high priest, Zech. iii. 5; and even by Jewish ladies of fashion in the days of Isaiah, Is. iii. 20; the flowing robe and turban still the prominent articles of a wealthy Arab's dress). Job's character as a magistrate the opposite of that ascribed to him by Eliphaz (chap. xxii. 5—9). Job not less just than generous. Observe—(1) Justice and benevolence the brightest ornament either of public or private life. Wisdom an ornament of grace and a crown of glory to all her possessors. Knowledge is a youth's diadem—*Arab Proverb.* (2) Uprightness of character and life to be worn as our dress; cleaving to us and accompanying us at all times and in all places. To be our *habit* in both senses of the word. Patent to the eyes of the world like our outer garments. (3) Upright conduct to be regarded as our honour. To be neither ostentatiously paraded nor pusillanimously ashamed of. (4) A better righteousness than our own given us in Christ as our ground of confidence before God (Rom. iv. 2—6; Gal. vi. 14; Phil. iii. 7—9).

3. *His boldness in opposing the wicked and oppressive.* Verse 17.—Perhaps also belonging to his character as a magistrate. "I broke the jaws (or jaw-teeth) of the wicked (especially the rich and powerful oppressor, often represented as a beast of prey, chap. iv. 10), and plucked the spoil out of his teeth." The opposite of the unjust judge in the Gospel (Luke xviii. 3. 4). Observe

—(1) A truly good man a comfort to the oppressed and a terror to the oppressor. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with him" (Prov. xxviii. 4). (2) A good man not deterred from duty by the fear of consequences. Job did good and executed justice at the risk—i. Of being unpopular with the great. ii. Of incurring personal danger. iii. Of much trouble to himself.

III. Job's anticipation. Verse 18.—Perhaps continued to the end of the chapter. "Then I said [within myself, while reflecting upon my prosperity and character], I shall die in my nest (in comfort and security, neither by a violent nor untimely, but a natural and peaceful death); I shall multiply my days as the sand" (or, according to another reading, "as the Phœnix"—a fabulous bird, said to spring from a nest of myrrh made by the parent bird before his death, living to the age of a thousand years, and coming from Arabia to Egypt once in five hundred years, and then burning his father,—a hieroglyphical mode with the Egyptians of representing a particular chronological era or cycle). Natural in Job's circumstances to cherish bright anticipations of the future. The tendency of continued prosperity and honour to beguile into false security and confidence. David's error (Ps. xxx. 6, 7). Job's anticipations to be soon apparently blasted. Yet in the end abundantly realized (chap. xlii. 16). Observe—

1. A good old age, and a comfortable death in the bosom of one's family and home, among the appointments of a favouring Providence. The opposite threatened as a punishment (Is. xxii. 17, 18; Jer. xxii. 18, 19). These, however, not proofs of pardoning mercy, nor necessarily belonging to the children of God. Ishmael, out of the covenant, dies in the midst of all his brethren; Moses, in it, dies alone on a solitary mountain (Gen xxv. 18; Deut. xxxii. 49, 50). Best to have the circumstances of our death as well as of our life chosen for us by our heavenly Father. The everlasting covenant of God's grace in Christ the softest and safest nest in which either to live or die (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). (2) To multiply our days a blessing; to make right use of them a greater. Days often multiplied only to multiply shame and sorrow (Is. li. 11). The longest life, if ill-spent, is short; the shortest, if well-spent, is long. Life not to be measured by the number of its days, but by the character of its deeds. (3) Job's anticipation, a long life and a comfortable death; that of the believer under the Gospel dispensation, an eternal blessedness reserved for him in heaven (2 Cor. iv. 18).

IV. Lessons suggested by the retrospect as a whole.

1. *Evidence of the statement that "the fear of the Lord is wisdom."* Job's piety the fountain both of his happiness and honour. None ever exhibited more of the former or enjoyed more of the latter. His life and experience a verification of the truth that "length of days is in wisdom's right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour" (Prov. iii. 16).

2. *Proof that true piety towards God is accompanied with the purest morality and love to men.* Job as much distinguished for the one as the other. The fear and love of God the only and sure guarantee of faithfulness and love to men. True piety the natural fountain both of a pure morality and a disinterested benevolence. Integrity of life and love to our neighbour only branches of that tree whose root is the love of God. Love to God the first table of the Decalogue; love to man the second. The two twin sisters of the same parent, the nature and image of God who is love. He who loves and fears God cannot be regardless of God's will or God's offspring.

3. *An example afforded of what grace can effect in restoring and renewing fallen humanity.* Job a specimen of the power of that grace of God which teaches us to "deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." His virtues not the product of fallen nature but of renewing grace. Though in the older dispensation and before the full effusion of the Holy Spirit, his character and life the fruits of that Spirit, viz., love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Gal. v. 17). Exhibits the features of the new man created in the believer by the Holy Ghost after the image of God. The object and effect of Divine grace to produce the lineaments of Christ, the perfect man in the renewed soul. The polluted but believing Corinthians not only justified but washed and sanctified (1 Cor. vi. 11). The converted cannibals of Fiji risk health and life to communicate their blessings to the cannibals of New Guinea.

4. *A pattern for Christians both in public and private life.* Job's daily life a scattering of seeds of kindness. Might have sat for the picture of the Good Samaritan. Job's goodness, if not his greatness, within everyone's reach. The poor always with us. No large estate required in order to be "eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor." A kind word or a trifling gift

often able to make the widow's heart sing for joy. More grace provided and attainable for the exercise of Job's virtues in the Christian dispensation than in that under which the patriarch himself lived. The follower of Jesus both required and enabled to practise every virtue and every praise that adorned Job's character (Phil. iv. 8).

5. *The retrospect of a holy and useful life a source of pure and elevated comfort in sickness and adversity.* Job's comfort in his afflictions not in looking back on his wealth and honours, but on the way he employed them. The seeds of scattered kindness in the time of health and prosperity often bear their fruit in this life in the season of trouble and adversity. Friends made of the "Mammon of unrighteousness," both for time and eternity (Luke xvi. 9). A man may be richer in the retrospect of the manner in which he spent his money than others who selfishly hoard it are in its continued possession.

6. *Example of the uncertainty of earthly comforts and riches.* None ever enjoyed more of these than Job, and none ever more thoroughly stripped of them. The comfortable nest in which he hoped to end his days now rifled and torn in pieces, and himself sitting, a loathsome leper, on an ash-heap. Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Madness to pursue a fleeting and neglect an enduring substance. Means and opportunities of doing good to be faithfully employed while they last. Riches not for ever, nor the crown to all generations.

7. *The experience of believers in respect to the sensible enjoyment of the Divine presence and fellowship liable to fluctuation.* Not only Job's outward and temporal but his inward and spiritual comfort now in an eclipse. The sin of God's countenance may for wise reasons be hidden behind a cloud. No proof of God's anger that His favour is not sensibly enjoyed. The shining of the sun to be *believed*, though not *seen*. The path of a believer through the world like that of the moon among sailing clouds. Darkness and light the experience of a believer till he reaches the land where there is no more night.

8. *An exemplification of the requirements of the moral law in respect to our neighbour.* Love to man, verified in continual acts of varied benevolence, the characteristic of Job's life. Such love the requirement of the second part of the Decalogue. Job's life and character no more than is required by the law of God from each individual according to his means and opportunities. Every shortcoming of it, sin. Hence the universal character of men as transgressors of the Divine law (Rom. iii. 23). Job himself, with all his integrity and benevolence, still a sinner as coming short of that law. Every mouth stopped, and the whole world guilty before God (Rom. iii. 19). An example of perfect obedience to the law of love found only in one of Adam's children.

9. *Job exhibited in this chapter as a type of Jesus Christ the Righteous.* The picture Job draws of himself only fully and perfectly realized in him who "did no sin," and who "went about, doing good" (Is. xi. 1—5; lxi. 1—3). Christ, the second Adam, the only perfect man. His life, even more than Job's, an exhibition of the beauty and excellence of the moral law, as well as a fulfilment of it. Christ fitted, therefore, to be our representative and head in a new covenant (Rom. v. 12—19). His perfect fulfilment of the law, for our sakes—(1) As a pattern for our imitation. (2) As a proof that He was what He professed to be—the Son of God and Saviour of men. (3) To give value to His death as a sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, Himself being without spot, and a sweet savour to God. (4) As a substitution for the perfect obedience required of each individual. (5) As the image and character to be reproduced in all who are united to Him by faith, as the members of that family of which He is the head and representative.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CONTRAST.—JOB'S SOLILOQUY, CONTINUED.

With his former state of happiness and honour Job now contrasts his present misery and degradation. His object as well to show the grounds he has for complaint as to ease his burdened spirit. Probably now sitting in the open air, near his own residence, outside the city. Still among the ashes, and covered from head to foot with the worst form of leprosy. Abandoned by his wife and domestics, and viewed by his pious visitors as suffering the penalty of past transgressions perhaps secretly committed, he is at the same time frequently surrounded by a rude rabble, especially of younger persons, who now, like the young men who mocked Elisha, deride him for his former piety and present affliction; perhaps taking a spiteful revenge for his former reproofs. These persons, whose character and condition, as well as that of their fathers, Job describes,

probably the remains of the Horites who had been conquered and dispossessed by the Idumdans, to whom Job's ancestors belonged, and who had now for some time been in possession of the country (Gen. xiv. 6; xxxvi. 20, 21; Deut. ii. 12, 22). Some of those Horites had probably been enslaved by their conquerors, while others, to preserve their liberty, had fled into the desert and taken refuge among the mountains.

I. Job describes the class of persons by whom he was now treated with scorn and insult (verses 1—8). These were—

1. *Younger than himself.* Verse 1.—"But now they that are younger than I have me in derision." Derision a bitter aggravation of affliction. Christ's experience (Matt. xxvii. 27—31; Luke xxiii. 34—37). Such treatment from juniors an aggravation of the trial. Seniors habitually treated with respect, and veneration paid to age among the orientals, especially in Arabia. Another aggravation in Job's case that he had formerly been treated with deference, not only by the youth but even by aged men, himself being still comparatively young (chap. xxix. 8). A sign of great corruption in morals when seniors are treated with disrespect, still more with derision—especially when these are in affliction and distress. Sad state of society when the youth are rude and insolent, and particularly towards those who suffer, whether from age, poverty, or affliction. David's prayer (Ps. cxliv. 11, 12).

2. *Base-born.* "Whose fathers I would have disdained to set with (in the same employment; or 'to set over,' as keepers; or 'to rank in equality with') the dogs of my flock." A large number of dogs required for Job's seven thousand sheep. Dogs anciently employed, as now, both for watching flocks and dwellings (Is. lvi. 10). Job's language in reference to these men probably from their character and conduct rather than their condition. Observe—(1) Sad when men, made in the image of God and capable of engaging along with angels in the highest and most honourable services, are inferior in usefulness and condition to the dogs that guard a flock of sheep, and from want of principle unfit to be entrusted even with such an employment. Dogs in the east esteemed unclean and treated with little consideration (Ps. lix. 14, 15). (2) *The character of sin to degrade men beneath the brutes.* Verse 8.—"They were the children of fools (or 'worthless, wicked men'—both by birth and imitation); yea, children of base men" (*Heb.*, "of men without a name"—with no reputation except a bad one—men of low birth and still lower character). Parentage of great account in the east. Felt to be a disgrace, as well as a loss, to be born of base and wicked parents. Children unable to help their birth; yet often "like father like child." Persons supposed to bear the character as well as the features of their parents. The education and moral training of the children of bad or base men usually neglected. Such children grow up in a morally poisonous atmosphere. The taint of the parent usually attaches more or less to the children. A man's parentage and education often indicated by his character and conduct. Children often inherit both the parents' vices and their consequences. To exult over the wretched sufficient evidence of a base extraction. An aggravation of Job's trial and degradation, to be "held in derision" by youths of such low and base parentage. The contempt of the vile a bitter trial to an ingenuous spirit. David's experience (Ps. xxxv. 15). Verified in that of Christ (Matt. xxvii. 27—31). The class of persons here described such as, from their character, were unable to obtain any respectable—however humble—employment. Job's example in regard to them to be imitated. Important for masters and heads of families to look well to the character of those whom they employ, even in the humblest situations. David's resolution (Ps. ci. 6, 7).

3. *Feeble and useless.* Verse 2.—"Yea whereto might the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age was perished?" (or, "in whom the vigour of manhood was lost;" or, "in whom there was no expectation of their ever reaching old age," whether from their vices or their mode of life,—neither having strength to work themselves nor wisdom to direct others). Job's reason for treating them as he did;—in this case the clause applied rather to the fathers than to the sons. Observe—(1) No uncommon thing for vices, as well as inadequate means of life, to enfeeble the frame and induce premature old age and death. Races by such means often stunted in stature as well as enfeebled in mind, and often die out. Often the case with the aborigines of lands taken into possession by a foreign race. Well if the vices, as in the case of the North American Indians and others, have not been imported by the foreigners themselves. (2) True religion favourable to physical as well as spiritual growth and development. Muscularity the natural outcome of a healthy Christianity. God's truth and service beneficial to man in all his aspects. (3) Godliness no less profitable to races than to individuals. Humanity itself either deteriorated by vices and their consequences, or

elevated by religion and morality. (4) Physical vigour and longevity among the features of the millennial period and the reign of righteousness upon earth. "The child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed. As the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. lxv. 20—22).

4. *Wretched and famished.* Verse 3.—"For want and famine they were solitary (or, 'afflicted,'—'desolate,' as in Isa. xlix. 21; or, in 'extreme want and hunger'); fleeing into the wilderness (as unfit for civilized life, or as loving the solitude and independence of the desert, or finally from a sense of guilt and shame as evil-doers; or, 'gnawing' and feeding on the wilderness), in former time desolate and waste (or, 'the night or darkness of the solitary waste'); who cut up mallows (or purslain, a species of halimus; a saltish plant growing in deserts, beside hedges, and by the sea-shore, and used as food by the poor) by the bushes, and juniper roots (or, 'roots of the broom,' a plant abundant in the sandy plains of Arabia) for their food" (or 'to warm themselves,'—the stems of the juniper or broom being used for fuel, as the berries and roots were for food). These men probably worse off for food than were Job's dogs. No fault however of Job's. Some prefer the most wretched fare to following an honest calling. One of the effects of sin, *somewhere*, that men are in any degree destitute of the proper means of life. Abundant provision originally made by the Creator for man's comfortable subsistence (Gen. i. 29). Man, continuing in obedience, would have eaten of the good, not only of Paradise, but of every land. The finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock the promised portion of obedient Israel (Ps. lxxxi. 16). The earth in consequence of man's sin, made to yield him thorns and thistles (Gen. v. 18). Vice and indolence in some, with tyranny and oppression in others, still continue want and misery in the world. Among the blessings of the better time coming under the Prince of Peace, is, that "the earth shall yield her increase," and men "shall eat and be satisfied" (Ps. lxvii. 6, 22, 26; Isa. lxv. 21, 22).

5. *Excluded from civilized society.* Verse 5.—"They were driven from among men,—to dwell in the cliffs (or 'clefts,'—perhaps rather 'the horrid gloom') of the valleys (ravines or torrent-beds), in caves of the earth and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed (like wild asses, for thirst or hunger; or 'groaned' from want and misery): under the nettles (or brambles) they were gathered together" (they huddled together; or "stretched themselves," as all the resting-place they had). To dwell in valleys in the East a mark of vileness. The rocks of stony Arabia abundant in caves. The text descriptive both of the country and the manners of the inhabitants. A people in that region anciently known as Troglodytes, or dwellers in caves. Such places the usual resort of some at least of the inhabitants of a subjugated mountainous country, as well as of the lowest and most lawless among the people. The fastnesses of the mountains in Wales the last resource of the ancient Britons. Dens and caves the refuge of the persecuted worshippers of Jehovah in the days of Ahab and at other times (1 Kings xvii. 4; Heb. xi. 38). The retreat of the Christians of Madagascar. The parties mentioned in the text expelled from the cities and inhabited parts of the country on account of their vicious conduct and disreputable character. Evil-doers in a state to be improved or expelled. The diseased limb, however, only to be cut off when all means of cure have failed. Time not to be lost in purging either Church or State of corrupt and incorrigible members. "One sinner destroyed much good." "Evil communications," &c. David's resolution as king of Israel and type of Messiah: "I will early cut off all evil-doers from the city of the Lord" (Psa. ci. 8).

6. *Depraved in character and conduct.* Verse 5.—"They cried after them as after a thief" (in the way of threatening, or in order to their apprehension, or to warn others of their character). Verse 8.—"They were viler than the earth" (or, "they were whipped out of the land," viz., for their evil deeds) perhaps one of the results of Job's careful administration of justice, for which the wretched vagabonds, or their sons, now make retaliation on the humbled magistrate (Prov. xx. 8, 26).

The section brings us face to face with a portion of the lowest stratum of humanity and the dregs of society. Such found in most countries, Britain not excepted. The result not merely of vice and indolence in themselves and their fathers, perhaps for generations, but also probably of oppression and neglect on the part of their superiors. Their existence in a country often, under Divine Providence, a retribution. Probably due to Christianity that the description in the text was not verified in the British refugees among the mountains of Wales, and even in the Saxons after the Norman possession. The waifs and roughs, thieves and city Arabs, in the slums of London, perhaps as much the result of harsh treatment and neglect as of personal depravity. Church and State in general only now beginning to wake up to a sense of duty in regard to this

class of society, when the case has become next to unmanageable. The great problem of the present day—What is to be done for the reclamation and elevation of the sunken masses? Much capable of being done both by Church and State, under the impulse of loving hearts and the direction of enlightened heads. The Gospel of the grace of God, suitably presented and lovingly applied, the Divinely-appointed, and therefore the most efficient, means of restoring fallen humanity. Embraces in the contemplated objects of its operation the lowest grades of society in every land. The commission of its Divine Author: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" Possesses in itself, and along with its faithful ministration, a power sufficient to elevate the lowest and reclaim the most utterly lost of the human family. "The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "Mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds" of ignorance and vice. Has already proved itself adequate to this end. Has achieved its triumphs both among the profligates of Corinth, and the Bechuanas of Caffraria. The glory of Christianity, that its greatest, and perhaps most numerous, trophies have been from among the lowest classes of society. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are" (1 Cor. i. 26—28).

Christianity suited to all classes and conditions of men. Views all men as brethren. Teaches the unity of the race. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts xvii. 26). The Gospel an enemy to caste of every description. All nations and all classes represented by it as equally the purchase of the same precious blood of the Son of God (1 Tim. ii. 6). The countless multitude of the redeemed before the throne gathered out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue (Rev. vii. 9). One of the precepts of Christianity, "Honour all men" (1 Pet. ii. 17. "Fraternity," and "equality," as well as "liberty," emblazoned on the Gospel banner. Corresponding responsibility involved in regard to its possessors. Only a Cain asks: "Am I my brother's keeper."

Solemn inquiry for every possessor and professor of the Gospel: Am I faithfully attempting to perform my part, however humble, in raising up the sunken masses of my brethren at home and abroad, by communicating to them that Gospel which has already done so much for many and for me? Am I, like the Master I profess to follow, while contemplating, whether with the eye of the body or of the mind, the multitudes that are as sheep without a shepherd, "moved with compassion towards them," and *so* moved as, like Him also, to reach forth a helping hand? or, Am I still verily guilty concerning my brother?

II. The treatment received from these persons (verses 9—14). Enlarged on by Job, as indicating how deeply he felt it. Particulars specified.

1. *His sufferings and afflictions made the subject of their coarse jests and ribald mirth.* Verse 9.—"And now I am their song (accompanied with a musical instrument); yea, I am their byword" (or jest, probably both from his former piety and present sufferings; perhaps, also, as the rich man brought low, the proud Emir humbled, and the secret oppressor punished). Similar treatment experienced by David, and by David's Lord and antitype (Psa. xxxv. 15; lxix 12). Christ, in His deepest affliction, taunted with His former trust in God and charity to men, while now neither delivered by God nor able to deliver Himself (Matt. xxvii. 43; Luke xxiii. 35). The prophet Jeremiah in his humiliation also the song of his ungodly countrymen (Lam. iii. 14, 63). In Job's case this treatment from the rabble less to be wondered at after the conduct of his pious friends. Note—The lower classes of the Arabs addicted to scurrility and abuse. Indulge freely in the streets and bazaars in satirical and abusive songs upon their rulers and superiors. Clever in extemporising verses, which they usually accompany with the music of a drum, tambourine, or lute.

2. *Shunned with abhorrence.* Verse 10—"They abhor me; they flee far from me." Their abhorrence of him from—(1) His loathsome disease. (2) His lying apparently under the Divine malediction. (3) His supposed wickedness and oppression as the cause of it. His miserable disease, instead of evoking sympathy, caused him only to be avoided as a pestilence or a sight too loathsome and shocking to be looked upon.

3. *Treated with insult and contempt.* "They spare not (either as doing it abundantly and repeatedly, or as casting off all restraint) to spit in my face" (or, in my presence). Note: Orientals seldom spit but for the purpose of insult, and much more frequently spit on the ground before the party they wish to insult than on his face or person, though both are done. To spit out before another an expression of the greatest contempt (Deut. xxv. 9).

Frequently done by Mohammedans in respect to Christians, whom they regard as infidels and dogs. So great the affront in the East, that when done even by a father in regard to his daughter, the shame of the thing required her to shut herself up in her tent or apartment for a whole week (Num. xii. 14). Sad contrast in Job's case with his former honour (chap. xxix. 8—11). This deep insult put more than once upon the Son of God while standing as our substitute. Predicted (Isa. l. 6). Realized (Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30).

4. *All restraint in regard to him cast off by the rabble around him, in consequence of his affliction.* Verse 11.—"Because he (the Almighty) hath loosed my cord (dissolved my strength and authority; or, according to another reading, 'his cord,'—giving loose reins to his anger), and afflicted (or humbled) me, they have also let loose the bridle before me" (have cast off all restraint in my presence, and treat me with unbridled insolence). All Job's afflictions ascribed by him to God as their first Author. His cord now loosed by Him, a sad contrast to his fond anticipation (chap. xxix. 8—11). Observe—*The wicked sometimes allowed to say and do whatever their pleasure may suggest or their malice invent.* This now done by Job's enemies—(1) As if it were a merit to treat with insult one who appeared the object of Divine execration. (2) From the absence either of power in himself or inclination in others to restrain them. The same experienced by the Saviour from the soldiers, servants, and others, when in the hands of his enemies (Mark xiv. 65; xv. 16—20).

5. *Violently pushed by rude youths, who employed every method to annoy and distress him.* Verse 12.—"Upon my right hand (—the place of accusers; also where he should otherwise have been most able to defend himself,—thus chosen for greater insult and contempt) rise the youth (*Hebrew*, 'brood,'—so called in disdain); they push away my feet (probably stretched out as he sat or lay among the ashes), and raise up against me the ways of their destruction" (or, "their destructive ways,"—the ways by which they may attack and destroy me, like the raised ways or banks of a besieging army, 2 Kings xix. 32). A wicked and mischievous band of city youths, like those who mocked Elisha at Jericho, now surround and assault him on set purpose to annoy and do him injury, as an army employing every means they can contrive to overthrow the beleaguered fortress. A picture of deeper degradation and misery hardly conceivable; all the darker from the contrast afforded by the previous chapter. Yet, even this only a shadow of the outrages endured by the King of kings when "made a curse for us" (Matt. xxv. 3, 4, to the end of that and the following chapter).

6. *His sufferings increased by the rabble, who seemed to take pleasure in adding to his affliction, and completing his overthrow.* Verse 13.—"They mar (cut up) my path (annoying me whenever I attempt to walk, and preventing all escape or access to me from without), they set forward my calamity [as if it afforded them profit as well as pleasure], they have no helper" (persons of the lowest and most worthless character). So Christ in His last sufferings reviled by the thieves that were crucified with Him (Matt. xxvii. 44). Observe—A mark of deepest depravity to take pleasure in another's calamity, and to add affliction to those already afflicted. Edom and other nations severely threatened for similar conduct in regard to humbled Israel (Ob. x. 15; Zech. i. 15). The experience also of David and David's son (Ps. lxix. 26).

7. *His utter ruin eagerly sought by the rabble multitude about him.* Verse 14.—"They came (or come) upon me as a wide breaking-in of waters (or, 'as by a wide breach'—the figure of a siege still continued); in the (or, like a) desolation (or, 'under the crash or ruin,' as of the falling walls and buildings of the breached fortress; or, 'with a tumult,' or 'shout' of triumph) they rolled (or roll) themselves upon me" (as a storming party entering the breach). Implies—(1) The number of those seeking to distress and overthrow him. (2) Their eagerness in their wickedness. (3) Their actual mischief.

The section affords an affecting view of the depths of Job's aggravated and accumulated sufferings. As if the sudden and peculiarly melancholy death of his whole ten children; the loss of his entire property; his personal suffering from a most loathsome and distressing disease; his being made the object of aversion by his wife and domestics, and of suspicion and reproach by his friends—as if all this had not been enough, he is subjected to the coarsest treatment and most unfeeling mockery from a low rabble, who take a fiendish pleasure in insulting him and adding to his affliction. Observe—

1. *Impossible to say to what suffering a child of God may be subjected in this world.* Sometimes all the powers of wickedness in earth and hell apparently let loose against him, while at the same time suffering under distressing dispensations of Divine Providence. No trial so sharp but a godly man may meet with it. If Satan has one dart in his quiver more fiery than another, he may shoot it at him. In respect to outward

trials and sufferings, but for the inward comfort and future hope afforded them, believers, sometimes, of all men the most miserable (1 Cor. xv. 19). Tribulation and persecution promised by the Master. This, at times, abundantly and amazingly realized. Witness the sufferings of the martyrs of Lyons, Smyrna, and elsewhere, in the second century. "Tortures by racks, by pincers, by faggots, by the tossings of wild beasts, by being seated in burning [iron] chairs, that the fumes of their roasting flesh might come up about them, amid scoffs and jeers from the rabble, when a word of retraction would have saved them." See *Dickinson's Theological Quarterly*, July, 1875, p. 389.

2. *Nothing strange for a child of God to fall from esteem into contempt and disgrace* (Matt. v. 11). Hatred and reproach their promised fare. Mockery not the least painful and effective species of persecution (Heb. x. 32, 33; Gen. xxi. 9 compared with Gal. iv. 29).

3. *The depravity of the human heart, which is capable of conduct such as is ascribed to Job's rabble persecutors.* "Murder," in its worst form, proceeding out of it (Matt. xv. 19). Capable of inflicting deliberate injury on those already deeply afflicted and suffering, from the mere gratification of a fiendish pleasure in witnessing it, or from a diabolical hatred of moral excellence in the sufferer.

4. *The intense malevolence and cruelty of Satan, the author of these aggravated sufferings on the part of Job, and the instigator of those wretched creatures whom he found or made his ready tools, in rendering his suffering as bitter as it could possibly be.* Nothing wanting on Satan's part if men are not as wretched and miserable as himself.

5. *The mutability of outward happiness and popular favour.* None ever enjoyed both in a higher degree than Job, and none ever, for a time, so entirely stripped of them. The fickleness of "fortune" and popular applause proverbial. The "Hosanna" of to-day the "crucify Him" of to-morrow. To-day a silken couch—to-morrow a scaffold. To-day Paul is ready to be worshipped as a divinity; to-morrow he is dragged out of the city and all but stoned to death. The believer's comfort—(1) That all these vicissitudes are under his Heavenly Father's appointment. (2) That his real happiness is elsewhere and far above the reach of change.

6. *The love of Christ in submitting, for our sake, to sufferings and indignities which are only foreshadowed in those of the Patriarch.* In the last eighteen hours of His life on earth all the bitter ingredients indicated in this chapter were infused into the cup of suffering appointed for Him as our substitute to drink. "He was made a curse for us," and therefore abandoned to every species of human endurance. The Gospel narrative presents us with a scene of suffering which only finds anything approaching a parallel to it in the case of the Patriarch, as exhibited in this and preceding chapters.

III. Reverts to his personal affliction, more especially as from the hand of God (verses 15—18). Laments.—

1. *The sad reverse in his condition.* Verse 15.—"Terrors are turned upon me (or, 'things are changed'—tables are turned with me; or, 'I am overthrown,' like a stormed fortress; or, 'trouble,'—carrying consternation with it, like the terror in a city taken by storm,—'pursues me'); they (the terrors or calamities) pursue (like the besiegers when entering the breach they have made in the walls; or, 'thou pursuest') my soul (*Heb.*, 'my nobility' or princely state—perhaps a term for the soul from its nobler nature) as the wind [pursues and drives along the chaff—*i.e.* vehemently and irresistibly]; my welfare (all the happiness and comfort of my life) passeth away as a cloud" [which leaves no trace of its former presence and can no more be recalled]. Observe:—(1). *Sad reverses from a happy and prosperous condition among the most painful of human trials.* (2) *Soul terrors the greatest troubles.* These not unknown to a child of God (Ps. lxxxviii. 15, 16). Amazement and consternation among the ingredients of Christ's cup (Mark xiv. 33, 34)

2. *His inward grief, expressing itself in continual groans and lamentations.* Verse 16.—"And now my soul is poured out upon me (or, 'within me,' as if dissolved in grief; *Heb.*, 'pours itself out,' *i.e.*, in tears and groans); the days of affliction have taken hold (or fast hold) of me" (like armed men entering a besieged city—denoting the violence of his troubles; "days of affliction," as indicating its continuance and the sad contrast with his former happy experience). Observe—*Days of affliction, sooner or later, and of longer or shorter continuance, to take hold of each* (Eccles xi. 8). Happy then to have one with us who "in all our afflictions is afflicted" (Is. lxiii 9). His promise (Is. xliii. 2). Christ's presence with us in the furnace quenches the violence of the fire (Dan. iii. 25; Heb. xi. 34).

3. *His bodily sufferings.* Verse 17.—"My bones are pierced in me (*Heb.*, 'from off me') in the night season (or, 'night pierceth my bones from off me,'—*i.e.* with acute pains, usually most severe in the night); and my sinews (or 'my gnawing pains') take (or find) no rest." Acute and gnawing pains added to all Job's other afflictions. Satan accom-

plishes his wish and goes the full length of his permission,—"Touch his flesh and his *bones*." The bones sensible of the most acute and severe pain. The affliction carried into his very bones. Severe suffering usually expressed by reference to the bones (Ps. li. 8; Is. xxxviii. 13). An aggravation of pain and suffering when endured in the night while others enjoy rest, and when one's own exhausted nature requires repose. Night also the season in which sorrow sinks deepest.

4. *The pollution of his garments and the changed appearance of his skin in consequence of his disease.* Verse 18.—"By the great force of my disease is my garment (either *literally*, in consequence of the purulent discharge from his sores; or *figuratively*, his *skin* so changed in its appearance that he could scarcely be recognized): it bindeth me as the collar of my coat" (vest, tunic, or inner garment—his loose outer garment being now so stiff with gore and matter as to sit as close to his person as his tunic; or, 'it — the disease—bindeth me about like my vest;' sitting as closely, constantly, and completely upon me as my tunic). A sore aggravation of disease—(1) When it pollutes our garments and disfigures our persons—(2) When it appears likely to yield neither to time nor treatment.

5. *Degradation coupled with extreme debility.* Verse 19.—"He (God, or, 'it,' the disease) hath cast me into the mire (as a wrestler seizing his antagonist by the throat and throwing him to the ground; or, hath rendered me filthy and abominable as one cast into the mire), and I am become like dust and ashes" (as low and mean, as weak and powerless, as the ashes on which I sit; or, I am reduced to dust and ashes, deprived of vital energy, and more like a corpse than a living man; his disease such as to give his body the appearance of clods and ashes, from its dried scabs and filthy ulcers). Observe—Piety enables us to keep an eye upon God as the supreme and sovereign Author of all our troubles. In one sense our troubles as truly from God, as in another from Satan, the world, or ourselves. God the ultimate Author, whoever or whatever may be the immediate instrument or occasion. No trouble but by His purpose and permission. Satan and the world only God's hand in afflicting and chastening His children. Satan's demand in regard to Job: "Put forth thy hand upon him;" God's answer, "He is in thine hand." Paul's thorn in the flesh from Satan, yet given by God (2 Cor. xii. 7). Better to think of God the *first* cause in our trouble, than of man or any other second cause. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Ps. xxxix. 9).

IV. Directs his complaint against God Himself (verses 20—22).

1. *As disregarding his prayer in his affliction.* Verse 20.—"I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear (or hearken, so as to help and deliver) me; I stand up (in frequent and earnest supplication; or, I stand, continue waiting and expecting an answer), and thou regardest me not" (or "thou considerest me" [and my case], but dost not answer or afford relief). Observe—(1) Crying to God a familiar exercise with Job. Good for us to have the path to the mercy-seat a well-trodden one. (2) Job not only *prayed* in his affliction, but *continued* to do so. Unlike the hypocrite (chap. xxvii. 10). (3) Standing a usual and Scriptnral posture in prayer (Gen. xviii. 22; Jer. xv. 1; Matt. vi. 5; Luke xviii. 11—13). The early Christians usually *knelt* in prayer on every day of the week, except *the Lord's day*, when they *stood*, as a posture more befitting a day of joy and triumph. (4) Sometimes one of the most painful trials to an afflicted child of God, to pray, and *continue* praying, without any apparent attention to his prayer on the part of God. The trial of David and of David's Lord in his deepest affliction (Psa. xxii. 1, 2; Matt. xxvii. 46). (5) God's regard to our prayer not to be judged by immediate appearances.

Answers to Prayer.

Believing prayer heard, though followed by no immediate or direct answer. Prayer offered through the Holy Spirit's assistance never unheard or unanswered. Answers to prayer not restricted to time or form. Sometimes, the thing itself not granted, but something better in its stead. So with Paul (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). With Christ (Luke xxii. 42, 43). Sometimes petitions for temporal benefits not granted, that those for spiritual and better ones may be so. The withholding an answer sometimes a greater blessing than the answer itself. God not a mere force, but an intelligence acting according to infinite wisdom and judgment in the bestowment of His mercies. "The absurdity of Tyndall's famous 'prayer-test' was, that it regarded God as simply a force in nature, and proposed to experiment with it to see just what it would do. . . . The impossibility of knowing the motives which actuate God must for ever render the expectation of receiving an invariable answer to any prayer absurd in the extreme. The very fact that our prayers are sometimes answered and sometimes denied, and that the answers when granted are sometimes modified and often delayed, is itself proof that we are dealing with a great intelligence,

whose acts are governed only by his own will and purposes."—*Rev. Jacob Todd, M.A., in Dickinson's Theological Quarterly*, July, 1875, p. 369. True and acceptable prayer carries in it submission to the Divine will. A part of every such prayer, understood if not expressed,—Not my will, but thine be done. Christ our exemplar in prayer (Luke xxii. 24). Himself the example of His own teaching (Matt. vi. 10). Believing prayer like seed, whose temporary disappearance in the earth is necessary to its production of fruit. All the tears of God's people put into His bottle, and all their prayers recorded in His book (Ps. lvi. 8). All Job's prayers at length abundantly answered, even in this life. Perhaps the most of believers' prayers only to be answered after they have ceased both to pray and live. Better, in trouble, to pray for patience to endure it, and grace to improve it, than for deliverance out of it

2. *As acting towards him with apparent cruelty and hostility.* Verse 21.—"Thou art become cruel to me (*Hebrew*, 'Art turned into a cruel one unto me'); with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me," (or, 'carriest on a bitter hostility against me;' or 'liest in wait for me'). One of the severest things Job ever uttered in regard to God, indicating the bitterness of his grief at being thus treated by Him as an enemy. Observe—(1) *The flesh has never, any more than Satan, anything good to say of God.* (2) *The flesh makes the most grievous mistakes in its judgments of God and of Divine things.* Says of God what is exactly true of the devil, and the very opposite of what is true of God. God is love, and Satan the impersonation of cruelty. His name *Satan* denotes "an adversary," and is closely allied to the word Job employs in speaking of God. Satan the opposer of every man's happiness, and especially the adversary of believers (1 Peter v. 8). (3) God may, for wise purposes, in a little wrath hide his face from his children "for a moment," and in apparent wrath may "smite them," though really in love (Isa. liv. 8; lvii. 17; Rev. iii. 19). Even this not the case at present in regard to Job. While Satan was bruising, God was praising him. (4) Job's experience in the text, without the sin, realized by his great Antitype when uttering the cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (Matt. xxvii. 46). For our sakes, that satisfaction might be made for man's sins, God obliged to assume the aspect of "a cruel one" to His own beloved Son. The bitterest element of the cup given him, as our surety, to drink.

3. *As sporting with his sufferings, and giving him up to destruction.* Verse 22.—"Thou liftest me up to the wind (like the grain thrown up from the threshing-floor by the winnowing shovel against the wind) thou causest me to ride (tossest me up and down, or carriest me away) upon it" (as the chaff of the threshing-floor when separated from the wheat, or as any light substance made the sport of the wind and carried away by it). Observe—(1) Job, under the misleading suggestions of the flesh, views God as sporting with his sufferings, while, in reality, glorying in him before principalities and powers as his faithful servant, who had not his like upon earth. (2) What Job here ignorantly and unbelievingly ascribes to God, very like what Satan desired to do with the disciples of Jesus in the night of their Master's betrayal (Luke xxii. 31, 32). The thing Satan was actually doing now with Job.

4. *As filling him with terror and making an utter end of him.* "Thou dissolvest my substance" (or, my health and soundness, as well from terror as disease; or "Thou dissolvest me, Thou terrifest me;" or, according to another reading, "Thou dissolvest me in the tempest's crash"). A tragic picture of inward as well as outward distress. Vague terror and deep depression of spirits among the effects of Job's peculiar disease. Trouble of soul the soul of all trouble. Terrible experience, when in affliction and trouble God is viewed as dealing with us in anger. Sometimes the temporary experience of a believer. Sure to be the unending experience of every impenitent unbeliever. God's terrors able to dissolve the firmest substance, and to terrify the stoutest heart. "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

V. Reflects upon the future (verses 23, 24).

1. *Anticipates death as the result of his present sufferings.* Verse 23.—"For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living" (the grave, or the earth, according to Gen. iii. 19; the book of Genesis, in some form or other, most probably in Job's hands). Job's language that of dejection and despondency, not without an alloy of petulance. Faith again at the ebb. Despondency one of the effects of his disease. Sense and sight said: "He will slay me—this disease must be fatal;" only faith could say: "I shall not die but live." Observe—(1) The flesh ever apt to draw hasty and wrong conclusions from God's dealings in Providence. (2) God acknowleged by Job as the dispenser of all His afflictions, and as the disposer of all events. None go down to the grave till God brings them there, though some are brought before their time. The keys of death and the eternal world in Christ's hands.

The grave the house appointed for all living.

Declares the general law relating to humanity. Only two known exceptions. More to be made at the Lord's second advent. Believers then changed without tasting of death (1 Cor. xv. 51. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15—17). Till Christ shall come, the grave the appointed receptacle for humanity. Job mistaken as to the time and occasion of his death; no mistake as to the fact of it. Every disease, if not strictly "unto death," yet brings us nearer to it. In regard to the issue of our trouble, God often better than our fears. Paul's case (2 Cor. i. 8—10). God as able to bring up from the grave as to bring down to it. The times of each in His hand. Useful in affliction to remember our mortality, and to regard death as the possible, if not the certain, result of it. From the universality of the grave as "the house appointed for all living," we learn—(1) *A lesson of humility.* Pride ill becoming in any creature,—preposterous in those who in a few years at most will have only a dark chamber in the earth of a few cubic feet for their dwelling, with the worms as their nearest companions, and actually making a banquet of their flesh. Such a dwelling awaiting the prince equally with the peasant. (2) *Earnestness in attending to present and important duty, more especially in seeking the eternal welfare of ourselves and others connected with us.* Opportunity for attending to the concerns of eternity confined to this life. The exhortation of Divine wisdom—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, &c., in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10). "The night cometh when no man can work." (3) *The evil of sin.* The grave not originally "the house appointed for all living." Death to mankind the result of transgression. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." "The wages of sin is death." No grave but sin has dug it. Terrible evil which has filled the world with sepulchres and dead men's bones. Sad to be in love with that which has proved the murderer of the race. So great an evil must require a corresponding means for its expiation and removal. (4) *The inflexible character of the Divine law.* The sentence against transgressors of that law fulfilled, though a whole race must be reduced to death. Adequate satisfaction to be made to it before the grave can close its mouth or yield up its dead to an eternal life. That satisfaction, through Divine compassion, already made. "By man came death; by man came also the resurrection from the dead." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "He suffered for our sins, the just One in the room of the unjust." "All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions. By His stripes we are healed. For the transgression of My people was he stricken. He hath made his soul an offering for sin. He bare the sin of many" (1 Cor. xv. 21; Rom. vi. 23, John xi. 25; Is. liii. 5—12). (5) *True wisdom to seek a better than an earthly portion.* The 'house appointed for all living' the end of all mere earthly enjoyments and possessions. Sad to spend our time only in the pursuit of such, and to be found at last with nothing we can carry with us beyond it. (6) *The grave the vestibule to two other houses, both eternal in their duration, but immensely different in their character* The one of these a home of light and beauty, peace and purity, life and health, joy and song, where death is unknown and no tear is shed. The other one of darkness and despair,—'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.' Solemn and important question for each—which of these shall be my home? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

2. *Despairs of help being afforded in answer to his prayers, and looks only for relief in the grave.* Verse 24.—"Howbeit (or surely) he will not stretch out his hand (in the way of help and deliverance) to the grave (now when I am already on the verge of it; or, 'surely prayer avails nothing when he stretches forth his hand,' viz., to smite or to slay); though they (or men) cry in his destruction" (the destruction sent by him—while he is visiting with destruction). The verse, however, may also be read as expressing the assurance of rest in the grave: "Howbeit he will not stretch out his [afflicting] hand to the grave (so as to afflict in or beyond it); in the destruction He sends there is deliverance." Or even as justifying prayer in such circumstances as this: "Howbeit, do not men [still] stretch out the hand [imploring help] in ruin, and utter a cry on account of it in the destruction which is sent by Him?" Observe—(1) *The language of unbelief,*—"*There is no hope.*" The flesh, even in a believer, ever ready in protracted trial and disappointed hope, to say, with Ahab: "Why should I wait any longer?" (2) *Faith in a believer has its*

ebbs and flows. Low water with Abraham's faith when he spoke to God of Eliezer of Damascus being his heir, and when he prayed that Ishmael might live before him,—as if he were to have no other son. Mounts and triumphs when he goes forth at God's command to offer up to God the heir of promise, believing that He was able even to raise him from the dead. Faith in its ebb with David when he said: "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." At its flow, when he wrote in the 118th Psalm: "I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Faith high in Elijah when he sent for Ahab and told him to gather together all the prophets of Baal; low, when he fled from the face of Jezebel and sat down under the juniper tree, with the prayer "Take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." Hard to believe when all appearances are, and continue to be, clean contrary to our prayers. The part of faith to hope against hope, having to do with a God to whom all things are possible, and who adopts as his title—"Thou that hearest prayer" (Ps. lxv. 2). (3) *Sweet consolation to a suffering child to know that he has at least rest and deliverance in the grave.* "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they do rest from their labours" (Rev. xiv. 13). Man cannot lay on his afflicting hand in the grave, and God will not. A believer's faith may not be able to see deliverance on this side of death, but clearly sees it on the other. (4) *A believer prays, although answers are withheld and there appears little prospect of any.* Prayer a necessity of his nature. A latent faith always in the renewed heart that God is gracious, and that He is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

VI. Expresses his disappointment and the grounds of it (verses 25, 26).

1. *The grounds of his disappointment.* Verse 25.—"Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" His sympathy deep and real. Conscience bore its testimony to the sincerity of his charity. Could appeal to those around him for the general and genuine character of his compassion. The question affirmed by the admission of Eliphaz (chap. iii. 3, 4). Having shown sympathy and compassion to others when in trouble, he calculated on experiencing the same himself when in similar circumstances. The same thought expressed by the Psalmist, speaking as the type of Messiah (Ps. xxxv. 13, 14). A natural as well as Scriptural law—"With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again (Luke vi. 38). True in respect to God, though sometimes for a time apparently otherwise. One of the laws of His kingdom,—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7). Generally, though not always, true in relation to men. Job and Job's Antitype remarkable examples of the contrary. In Christ's case, unbounded compassion and tenderest sympathy repaid with cruelty and insult. An aggravation of trouble when sympathy and compassion are withheld where there is a just right to expect them. Mark of monstrous depravity when the sympathizing and compassionate are treated with unkindness and cruelty.

Job, according to the text, a beautiful example of Christian sympathy. The exemplification of the precept: "Weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). Remarkable manifestation of the grace of the Spirit in patriarchal times. May well put many living under the Christian dispensation to the blush. The great want in the Church of Christ, the Master's sympathy and compassion for the poor and afflicted. Yet the glory of Christianity and the evidence of its Divine character, that such a spirit has been so largely produced under it. Among its characteristic precepts are: "Be pitiful;" "Put on bowels of mercies" (1 Peter iii. 8; Col. iii. 12). Christ's compassionate spirit, in a greater or less degree, infused into all His members. The privilege as well as duty of believers, to be filled and pervaded with it (Eph. v. 18). Provision made for this in the present dispensation by the full bestowment of the Holy Spirit. Such sympathy and compassion the necessary qualification for Christian usefulness.

2. *The disappointment itself.* Verse 26.—"When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for (or expected) light (happiness and joy), there came darkness" (trouble and distress). Natural to expect happiness as the result of piety. Godliness has the "promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). Wisdom's ways pleasantness, and all her paths peace. Experienced as a matter of fact. The experience of Job himself previous to his calamities, and again after they were past. Promises of temporal happiness and comfort to be understood with an exception of needful trials. Fear of future trials not foreign to Job in the time of his prosperity (chap. iii. 25, 26; i. 5; ii. 10). Observe—(1) Trials as well as comforts necessary in a state of discipline. Darkness as well as light needful in the spiritual as in the natural world. (2) A believer's expectation, if good, always realized, though not always in this life or in the things of it. His trials and disappointments blessings as well as his comforts.

VII. Enlarges on his troubles (verses 27—31).

1. *Incessant inward as well as outward affliction.* Verse 27.—"My bowels boiled (with inward distress, as Lam. i. 20, or as the physical effect of his disease), and rested not (continued to do so without intermission, night and day); the days of affliction prevented me" (met me or came upon me suddenly and unexpectedly—an aggravation of the trouble).

2. *Continued grief.* Verse 28.—"I went (moved about) mourning (or black, in person or attire) without the sun." Not as the effect of exposure to the heat; or, in gloomy solitary places; or, in a state of dejection and sorrow. Reference perhaps to his experience previous to his disease, which probably kept him confined to his dwelling or the vicinity of it; enough in the loss of his ten children to occasion it.

3. *Public and unrestrained complaint.* Verse 28.—"I stood up [through deep earnestness and anguish], and I cried (as the expression of deep and uncontrollable grief, or as imploring relief and aid) in the congregation" (assembled for public business or Divine worship). Here also probable reference to the period in which he was still able to mingle with others and to appear in the public assemblies, and hence previous to his being smitten with his leprosy. Lepers excluded from society (Lev. v. 2, 3). Miriam, under the same disease, shut out from the camp seven days (Numb. xii. 15). King Azariah, when a leper, obliged to dwell in a "several," or separate house, and "cut off from the house of the Lord" (2 Chron xxvi. 20, 21. Usual for Orientals to give vent to their feelings in public.

4. *Solitary moaning.* Verse 29.—"I am a brother (by close resemblance) to dragons (or jackals, which roam in solitary places and utter doleful and hideous cries, especially in the night), and a companion to owls" (or ostriches, also remarkable for their loud nocturnal cries (Mic. i. 8).

5. *The disfigurement of his person, and internal physical suffering.* Verse 30.—"My skin is black upon me (or, becomes black [and falls] from off me, among the effects of his disease, hence called the black leprosy: the skin, however, also blackened by grief, Psa. cxix. 83; Jer. viii. 21; Lam. v. 16); and my bones are burned with heat" (as the result of internal inflammation, or expressive of inward distress, Psa. cii. 3).

6. *His whole experience one of sorrow and lamentation.* Verse 31.—"My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ (or pipe) into the voice of them that weep" (as at funerals—the early practice of funereal wailing still continued in the East). The harp, and organ or pipe, instruments of music earliest in use. Mentioned Gen. iv. 39. Indicative of the period in which the patriarch lived. Especially employed on joyful occasions. The language descriptive of a melancholy change from a joyous to a sorrowful experience. The sudden transition from previous joy an aggravation of present sorrow. Observe—(1) Job's previous life one rather of gaiety than gloom. True piety the sister of innocent pleasure. Wisdom's ways those of pleasantness. The voice of rejoicing and salvation heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. (2) The holiest heart and the happiest home liable to be overtaken by sudden and overwhelming sorrow. The major key often exchanged for the minor, and the song of gladness for the wail of grief. His Father's "house" the only place where the believer's sun never goes down, and his moon never withdraws itself. Heaven the only land where the harp and the organ are always in use, and the garments are always white.

Job held up in these tragic verses as an affecting picture of human distress. The inquiry suggested—why such grief and trouble under the administration of a benevolent Creator? Why its existence at all? Why in connection with comparative innocence? Why in the experience of a child of God? (1) The existence of suffering easily accounted for on the ground that sin is in the world. Sorrow and suffering the shadow cast by sin. Sin and suffering inseparably linked. Absence of sorrow impossible in a world of sin. Suffering to be viewed either—(i.) As the necessary and inevitable accompaniment of sin, as pain accompanies inflamation; or (ii.) as the infliction of a penalty, as punishment follows transgression in the state; or (iii.) as a kind and salutary discipline, like that employed by a father with his children. No absolutely innocent person in the world. The comparatively innocent necessarily suffer along with the guilty. Often suffer in consequence of the sin and suffering of others. (2) Suffering in a child of God part of the treatment necessary for his perfection and preparation for his eternal inheritance. A need-be for his heaviness through manifold temptations. Gold necessarily tried and purified in the fire. The believer's troubles necessary for the exercise and development of the graces of the Spirit. Made to conduce to the glory of God and the benefit of others. God sometimes glorified more in His patient than in His prosperous children. Suffering a theatre for the display both of the excellence and reality of true religion. Often the very result of the character and condition

of a child of God. Such the special object of Satan's temptations and the world's persecution. By his renewed nature, made more sensible of the evil of sin within himself, and more deeply affected with the sufferings and sins of others. The glory and privilege of a child of God to be made a partaker of the afflictions of Christ, and for the same object (Col. i. 24). (3) Suffering and sorrow to be expected in the world as long as Satan is permitted to go up and down in it (chap. i. 7). This not always to be the case (Rev. xx. 1—3).

CHAPTER XXXI.

JOB'S SELF-VINDICATION.—HIS SOLILOQUY CONTINUED.

Concludes his speeches by a solemn, particular, and extended declaration of the purity and uprightness of his life. Especial reference to his *private*, as before to his *public*, conduct. Intended to silence his accusers and justify his complaints. Affords a picture of an outwardly and blameless character. A specimen, presented in beautiful language, of a pure morality accompanied with, and based upon, an ardent piety and genuine religion. Job asserts—

I. His chastity. Verse 1.—"I made a covenant with (or laid a solemn charge upon) mine eyes: why (or how) then should I look (or that I would not look) upon a maid" [to lust after her, as Matt. v. 28]. Speaks especially as a married man, and with reference to the sin of adultery. Already beginning to prevail in that early period, particularly with the rich and powerful. Hence Abraham's apprehension and temptation (Gen. xii. 11—15); and Isaac's, (Gen. xxvi. 7—10). Observe—

1. The text the language of *holy resolution.* The soul to act as lord of the body. The body with its members, organs, and senses, to be kept in subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27). The avenues to temptation to be guarded. The eye the inlet of lust. *Occasions and temptations to sin to be guarded against as well as sin itself.* The neglect of Job's resolution the occasion of David's fall and broken bones (2 Sam. xi. 2—4; Ps. li. 8). The Saviour's rule—"If thine eye offend thee"—prove a constant or frequent occasion of sin by awaking lust—"pluck it out"—remove the occasion of sin at whatever cost (Matt. v. 28). Eve's looking on the forbidden fruit the occasion of her own fall and the ruin of millions of her offspring. Lot's wife looking back on Sodom the cause of her petrifaction into a pillar of salt. Dinah's idle curiosity in visiting a heathen city to see its women, the loss of her own chastity. Achan's looking on the golden wedge and Babylonish garments the loss of his life (Josh. vii. 21). Samson's sleep on Delilah's lap the loss of his locks (Judges xvi. 19). "Look not on the wine when it is red" (Prov. xxiii. 31). David's (or Daniel's?) prayer: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" (Ps. cxix. 37). Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair refused even to look upon its wares. The contrast of the text in 2 Peter ii. 14, "Having eyes full of adultery."

2. Job's *reasons* for his resolution. (1) *His preference for a better portion.* Verse 2.—"For what portion of God is there [in such a case] from above? and what inheritance from the Almighty on high?" Job taught to distinguish between present pleasure and future bliss, and between the mere gratification of lust and the enjoyment of true happiness. No gratification of the senses to be compared to the enjoyment of God's favour. A man must either forego the pleasures of sin or the joys of heaven. Nothing unclean admitted within the New Jerusalem. The gratification of sinful passion incompatible with the enjoyment of God's presence. Observe—(i.) *In order to the resisting of temptation and avoiding of sin, important to "have respect to the recompense of reward"* (Heb. xi. 26). Thus Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season (Heb. xi. 25). Having this respect, Mary chose the good part, and turned her back on the world; *not* having it, the rich young man chose the world, and turned his back upon Christ. (ii.) *Necessary to choose between the* enjoyment of sin and the enjoyment of God, and between a portion *in this world and one in the next.* The whole tenour of a man's life here, and the whole eternity of his experience hereafter, determined by the choice he makes between the two. (iii.) God not only the Bestower of a believer's portion, but the portion itself (Ps. xvi. 5). Such portion to be desired in preference to all earthly and sensuous enjoyment, as—*First:* More excellent in itself, and more becoming man's better nature as a moral and intellectual being. *Second:* More satisfying to such a being, and to one made capable, as man is, of enjoying his Maker's friendship. *Third:*

More enduring, the one terminating at the farthest with death, the other extending throughout eternity. *Fourth:* Attended with no remorse. *Fifth:* Followed by no penalty. (2) *His dread of the consequences of sin.* Verse 3—"Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment (a terrible calamity or 'alienation'—viz., from God and all good) to the workers of iniquity?" Reference to the "terrors of the Lord" important in persuading ourselves, as well as others, to the avoidance of sin (2 Cor. v. 11). Christ's argument, "What shall a man be profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Better to enter into life with one eye or one foot, than having two eyes or two feet to be cast into hell. Better lose everything than lose heaven. Every loss light compared with the loss of the soul. Observe—(i.) *Destruction certain to the wicked and impenitent.* The wicked turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God (Psa. ix. 17). (ii) *No earthly calamity equal to that which must one day overtake the ungodly.* The destruction of the Old World by water, and that of Sodom and Gomorrha by fire, only a foreshadowing of the destruction of the impenitent at the final judgment. Inconceivable terrors involved in the sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41). "Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. i. 9). Such destruction the righteous penalty of wilful transgression of the Divine law, rebellion against the Divine government, and refusal of the Divine mercy. Natural that whatsoever a man soweth that he should also reap. Destruction and misery the flower and fruit of sin. Sin is misery in the seed; misery is only sin in the bloom. (3) *The recollections of God's constant inspection.* (Verse 4.)—"Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" (or actions,—every separate act or passage in my course on earth) Omniscience a necessary attribute of godhead. An open eye the Egyptian hieroglyphic for deity. "Thou God seest me," the guardian of Job's life. Not easy to sin under the gaze of the broad eye of the Almighty. Few so hardy as to break the Queen's commands with the Queen herself looking on. The practice of sin the result of forgetfulness of God. The language of the heart if not of the lips of the ungodly,—No eye shall see me (ch. xxiv. 15). To walk before God the easy and natural way to be perfect and upright (Gen. xvii. 1).

II. His honesty, uprightness, and freedom from covetousness (verses 5—8). "If I have walked with vanity (lived in the practice of falsehood and hypocrisy), or if my food hath hasted to deceit (to the commission of a fraud); let me be weighed (*Heb.*, 'let him—or any one—weigh me') in an even balance (*Heb.* 'in the balances of righteousness,') that God may know my integrity (should there be any doubt in the matter, which however is impossible). If my step hath turned out of the way (the straight way, or way of truth and uprightness, the only way that men should walk in), and mine heart walked after mine eyes—(gone out in covetous desire after the possession of what I have seen, as Ahab's heart went after Naboth's vineyard,—the eye being the inlet of covetousness as well as of lust), and if any blot (or stain of wrongdoing, unjust gain, or bribe for the perversion of justice) hath cleaved to my hands (in the transaction of any business with my fellow-men, or in the discharge of my duty as a magistrate and a judge); then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring (or my produce) be rooted out." The language—

1. *Of conscious innocence and integrity.* Job able unhesitatingly to appeal to his neighbours and to God Himself in the declaration of his honesty and uprightness both in private and public life. So Samuel at Gilgal (1 Samuel xii. 3; and Paul at Miletus (Acts. xx. 18—20, 33—35). Job's character as here given by himself only that already given him by God.

2. *Of, in some degree at least, self-ignorance and pride.* Job apparently still too confident in his own righteousness. Though upright in his external dealings, and blameless in the eyes of men, yet, weighed "in the balances of righteousness," even Job found wanting (Rom. iii. 9, 10, 19, 23). Much self-knowledge yet to be gained by him. Job yet to take the place of the publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner" (chap. xl. 4; xlii. 5, 6).

3. *Of sincerity.* A mark of uprightness, when we are not only willing but wishful, if we have done wrong, to suffer for it. David's case (Ps. vii. 3—5. Paul's Acts xxv. 11).

Job's imprecation suggests that, in the providence of God, *punishment in this world is often according to the nature of the sin.* Cruelty and wrong done to others often punished by the same being experienced by ourselves. Injustice in our gains punished by a blight on our substance. Same principle acknowledged in the next sin specified.

III. His freedom from adulterous desires and practices. Verses 9—12.—"If mine heart hath been deceived by

(or enticed towards) a woman (especially one married—temptation from a maid spoken of already, verse 1); or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door (watching the opportunity of his absence); then let my wife (my *own* wife) grind (become an abject slave; Exod. xi. 5; Is. xlvii. 2; and concubine) to another, and let others bow down upon her."

Adultery apparently prevalent in the time of Job and the writer of the book (chap. xxiv. 15). Job declares his freedom from the sin as an exceptional thing among the great men of his time and country. A sin to which his riches and power afforded, as in David's case, a strong temptation. Not uncommon in patriarchal times for the great to take another man's wife, though at the expense of her husband's life. Hence Abraham's and Isaac's fear for their wives' chastity and their own lives—the one in Egypt, and both in Gerar (Gen. xii. 12; xx. 2; xxvi. 7). One of the ten commandments in the Decalogue expressly directed against this sin. Its commission punished with death (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22). The sin apparently prevalent in the time of David and Solomon (Ps. l. 18; Prov. vi. 24—29; vii. 5—9; and of the later prophets, Jer. v. 8; ix. 2; Ezek. xviii. 6). Common among the Jews in the time of the Saviour (John viii. 3—9). The Pharisees and Rabbis themselves said to have been notoriously guilty of it (Rom. ii. 22). The destruction of Jerusalem and the Great Captivity under the Romans ascribed by the Talmud to its prevalence for forty years previous to that event.

Job's *reasons for abstaining from this sin.* Verse 11.—

1. The *heinousness of the crime itself:* "For this is an heinous crime." Sin to be avoided on account of its heinousness and malignity, apart from its consequences (Jer. xliv. 4). Adultery the most heinous form of covetousness and theft. The most aggravated wrong that can be done to another. Inflicts the deepest wound and in the tenderest part. Robs him of honour and home. Covers his family with shame. Defilement of a man's wife worse to endure than her death. Adultery a species of murder. The ruin of the injured man's peace, and often leading to bloodshed and death.

2. *Its consequences.* These were—(1) *Civil and judicial.* "It is an iniquity to be punished by the judges"—probably authoritative umpires or arbitrators in the case of any serious charge between man and man, with power to inflict appropriate penalty—usually the elders of the people (Deut. xxi. 2; Josh. xx. 4). Adultery a capital crime, not only among the Jews but other nations of antiquity. The magistrate appointed by God to be a terror to evil doers (Rom. xiii. 1—4). Some sins only cognizable by God; others punishable by man. A special heinousness in a crime punishable by the civil magistrate. (2) *Natural and providential.* "For it is a fire that consumeth unto destruction, and would root out all mine increase." Sin in general, and sins like adultery in particular, a "fire taken into the bosom" (Prov. vi. 27). Its tendency to destroy comfort, health, reputation, family, estate; and ultimately the soul itself in endless perdition. One single act brought constant trouble into David's house and lasting sorrow into his heart. Sin destructive in its own nature; and some sins naturally more destructive than others. Many, if not all, sins carry with them their own punishment.

The imprecation in the text strongly declarative of Job's innocence. The evil imprecated, the very last a man would wish to himself. The penalty invoked in accordance with the nature of the offence. "By what a man sins by that is he punished."—*Jewish Proverb.* David's adultery with Bathsheba is punished with incest between his son and daughter, and the defilement of his concubines by his own son. His murder of Uriah is punished by the murder of his incestuous son by the hand of his own brother (2 Sam. xiii. 16).

IV. His justice and humanity to his servants or slaves. Verse 13.—"If I did despise the cause (or rights) of my manservant, or of my maidservant (my bondman or my bondwoman, my male or female slave), when they contended (had any controversy) with me." In the East, masters viewed as having absolute right over their servants or slaves. These considered a portion of the master's property. Were not permitted to appear in a court of justice against him. Might therefore be the object of any oppression without human redress. Job's conduct towards his slaves the opposite of that of an oppressor. Probably exceptional, and just such as became a professed servant of the true God. His slaves treated by him, in the case of any complaint, as having rights equal with his own.

The *grounds* of this treatment of his slaves or servants:—

1. *The consideration that for his conduct towards them he was amenable to God.* Verse 14.—"What then should I do when God riseth up? (to examine into my conduct, or to execute judgment on me as a transgressor, or finally, to plead the cause of the oppressed slave), and when he visiteth (for

the examination of conduct or the punishment of offences) what should I answer him" (for such conduct, so as to escape His anger)? Observe—(1) *The fear of God an effectual restraint on Job and all good men.* Joseph's case: "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The principle of Nehemiah's upright and disinterested conduct (Neh. v. 15). (2) *A day coming in which God makes inquisition into the conduct both of masters and servants, rulers and ruled.* The highest as well as the lowest amenable to His tribunal. (3) *God viewed by the natural conscience as a righteous and impartial judge.* (4) *Justice even in respect to the most outcast, a duty written on the conscience of mankind.* (5) *Men helpless against God's determination to punish the transgressor.* The most powerful tyrant feebler than the puniest insect before Him.

2. *As having the same Creator, and mode of creation.* Verse 15.—"Did not he that made me in the womb make him?" Master and servant the similar work of the same Creator, and therefore both equally valued and cared for by Him, and to be treated on equal terms by each other.

3. *As having the same nature.* "Did not one fashion us in the womb" (or, "did not He fashion us in one and the same womb—one by similarity, not numerically). Both formed in the same manner and possessed of the same human nature. A woman's womb the origin of both (Mal. ii. 10). The fundamental equality of mankind thus strongly asserted. The sentiment confirmed by the Apostle—"God hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. (Acts xvii. 26). The Negro and the Papuan with the same essential features of humanity as the European. The slave possessed of the same faculties and powers, both moral and intellectual, as his master. The points in which men naturally differ from each other small and few compared with those in which all are alike. Men in a proper sense brethren, of whatever nation or class in society. The language of Job strikes at the root of slavery as justified by inferiority of race. Equality between master and servant, in the eyes of God, the teaching of the New Testament. Slavery not expressly forbidden, but principles inculcated which necessarily lead to its overthrow as Christianity advances. The views expressed by Job, in respect to man, of an advanced character for that period of the world. Only even now becoming universally acknowledged and acted upon by the Christian Church. Sentiments and practice of an opposite kind till very lately prevalent in a large portion of the Christian world. Even Christians justified the poet's satire—

"Man finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not coloured like his own; and having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey."

V. His benevolence and kindness to the poor. Verses 16, 17.—"If I have withheld the poor from their desire (their due wages, or rather the perquisites for which they looked as something belonging to them), or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail [by long withholding from her the expected help or redress]; or have eaten my morsel (or bread) alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof." Claims of the *poor* constantly recognized in the law of Moses. Perquisites appointed for them in the harvest and in the vintage (Lev. xix. 9; xxiii. 22); in every seventh year (Exod. xxiii. 11); and in every third year's tithes (Deut. xiv. 28, 29). Kindness and readiness to help the poor strictly enjoined (Deut. xv. 7—11). Their wages to be promptly paid them (Lev. xix. 13). Observe—Help as well as justice to the poor to be not only rendered, but rendered *promptly*. He gives twice who gives at once.—*Latin Proverb.* Job's conduct the opposite of that of the unjust judge in the parable (Luke xviii. 2, &c.).—Provision made by the Mosaic law for the *widow* in common with the poor in general. Their perquisites the same (Deut. xix. 21). Her raiment not to be taken to pledge (Deut. xxiv. 17). Herself not to be harrassed or afflicted (Exod xxii. 22). A curse pronounced on those who should wrong her or "pervert her judgment" (Deut. xxvii. 19). Job, probably long before the law was given, careful to afford the poor and the widow their just rights, and to fulfil their reasonable expectations. The law from Sinai a Divine sanction to duties already performed by many without it, through the law written on the conscience, and the principle of grace infused by the Holy Spirit.—Kindness to and care of the *fatherless* also strictly enjoined by the Divine law. These objects of sympathy and compassion usually joined with the poor and the widow. Job's table open to the poor and needy. Common in the East to admit poor persons and strangers to their table or to send them portions from it. Hospitality a cardinal virtue among the Arabs. To be cultivated as a Christian grace (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2). Enjoined as a Christian duty (Luke xiv. 13). "Ready to distribute," a New Testament precept (1 Tim. vi. 18). The section suggestive of the duty of

Kindness to the poor.

Reasons and motives for its exercise—

1. The desire to relieve suffering and extend happiness.

2. The claim the poor have upon us as fellow-creatures and partakers of our common humanity. A Divine principle that where there is lack on the part of any member of the great family, it should be supplied out of the abundance of others (2 Cor. viii. 13—15). All living creatures, according to their nature, claim our help in suffering circumstances. Still more those of our own flesh. Kindness and benevolence to the poor and destitute allied to justice. Love a debt we owe to all our brethren. Kindness to the poor only one form of that love (Rom. xiii. 8—10).

3. The principle that we should do to others as we would that they should do to us in similar circumstances (Luke vi. 31).

4. The will and authority of our common Maker and Parent.

5. The example of the heavenly Father (Luke vi. 35, 36).

6. The special example of Christ, who "for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). His life a going about doing good.

7. The manner in which God has identified the cause of the poor with His own, and in which Christ has done that of His disciples (Prov. xix. 17; Matt. xxv. 40, 45).

8. Active kindness to the poor a fruit of the Spirit, and an instinct of the new nature created in a believer after the image of God, (Gal. v. 22; Col. iii. 10—12).

Lower and less worthy considerations—

1. The pleasure in the exercise of the benevolent affections, in relieving the sufferings and contributing to the happiness of others. The luxury of doing good.

2. The remembrance of our own liability to poverty and suffering, and our possible need of the help and sympathy of others.

3. The reward in an approving conscience and the "blessing of those who were ready to perish" (chap. xxix. 13.)

The exercise of kindness and benevolence marred by the introduction of selfish elements.

Kindness to the poor and needy to be—

1. Free and spontaneous.
2. Disinterested and pure from selfish motives.
3. Sincere and undissembled.
4. Prompt and seasonable.
5. Unwearied and persevering.
6. Self-denying as far as is necessary.
7. Impartial and general.
8. Up to our ability and opportunity.
9. Judicious and discriminating. Help given to the poor, without judgment and discretion, may be more injurious than beneficial. Our charity, like God's, to be directed by "wisdom and prudence" (Eph. i. 8). Relief not only to be given, but given to the proper *objects* and in the proper *form*.
10. Hearty and cheerful. Kind deeds to be accompanied with kind words and kind looks (Rom. xii. 8). The *manner* of the deed often as important as the deed itself.

Job's *reason* for his assertion, with stronger affirmation of it. Verse 18.—"For from my youth, he (the fatherless) was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided (helped or comforted) her (the widow) from my mother's womb" (a strong hyperbole, meaning, "from my earliest years"). To assert more strongly his benevolence, he assigns a reason for it, and adds something in regard to its exercise. With him the practice was nothing new. Benevolence was his natural disposition. Speaks of it as something born with him. Kindness to the widow and fatherless had been practised by him from his earliest years. Had grown with him into a habit or second nature. Much of this habit probably due to the character, and care of his parents. Neither the name of his father nor mother mentioned; but their eulogy unintentionally written in these words. His home a pious one, and his up-bringing according to godliness. Care early bestowed by his parents on his moral training. Observe, in respect to—

Early moral training—

1. *Some born with dispositions naturally more benevolent than others.* Such a disposition a favour from the Author of our being. Responsibility connected with its cultivation and exercise. Natural disposition to benevolence not necessarily followed by the wise, persevering, and self-denying practice of it. In Job's case, the disposition fostered by his parents, and improved by himself through the constant exercise of kindness to the poor and needy. All probably born with more or less of such a disposition to begin with. A fragment of the Divine image imparted in creation. The least of it capable of increase through cultivation and practice. Its introduction in early life possible, and to be expected under the Christian economy and the dispensation of the Spirit. The natural disposition of children often an inheritance from their parents.

2. *Children capable of being trained to the exercise of the benevolent affections.* To be

trained to "minister" and to show kindness to the poor and suffering, one of the most important parts of a child's education. Such education more especially devolving upon the parents, and particularly the mother. Under the parents' careful and constant attention, habits of good-doing capable of being formed in early life.

3. *Early habits of benevolence among the principal means of forming the character in after years.* A child trained to such habits may become, in a greater or less degree, a Howard or an Elizabeth Fry. A Nero only the development of a child allowed to take pleasure in torturing a bird, or sticking a pin through a fly. The child the father to the man.

Job resumes the declaration of his humanity and benevolence, and asserts it in respect to *clothing* as well as feeding the poor. Verses 19, 20.—"If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering (by night or by day); if his loins have not blessed me (in gratitude for my clothing them), and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep" (or lambs, woven into cloth to serve him for a garment by day and a coverlet by night). Clothing the poor a needful form of benevolence in Arabia as well as in Britain. The cold of winter at times severe, all the more sensible after the extreme heat of summer. The nights often as cold as the days are hot. Clothing especially manufactured from the wool of sheep; a coarser kind from the hair of the camels. The earliest kind of clothing the skins of animals (Gen. iii. 21). The next step a garment made of the wool woven into cloth. Sheep chiefly valuable in the East on this account. The wool not only a beneficent provision for the animal itself, but for man who was to be its keeper. One of the sons of Adam, and the first martyr, a keeper of sheep (Gen. iv. 2).

Clothing the poor repeatedly mentioned in Scripture as one of the duties of charity. One of the forms of loving service rehearsed by Christ from the judgment seat, as having been performed by the righteous on Himself in the person of His followers. (Matt. xxv. 36). The duty enjoined by the Baptist as a proof of true repentance—"He that hath two coats let him give to him that hath none." The name of Dorcas now a household word, from her kindness in clothing the poor. Perhaps as many perish for want of clothing as for want of bread. To be feared that garments lie in the chest, or hang in the wardrobe, which ought to clothe the "loins" of the poor. "The boards of my floor can well want carpets while so many of the poor around me want clothes to their backs" (*Fenelon*).

Declares, further, his humanity *negatively*. Had never used intimidation or violence in regard to the fatherless, nor used his influence in court to their disadvantage. Verse 21.—"If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless (either to threaten or oppress him, —to 'smite with the fist of wickedness,' Is. lviii. 4), when I saw my help (or advantage, or those who were ready to support me) in the gate" (or court of justice, where a controversy was pending between us). Observe:—

1. Humanity exercised as well in what we refrain from doing as in what we do.

2. A strong temptation to the rich and powerful to take advantage of their position in a dispute with the poor. Cases of complaint against injury usually decided in the east by the opinion of the judge or Kadi, or by the voice of the majority of elders. A man of power and influence easily able to carry a case in his favour against the weak and defenceless. Such cases of complaint probably not infrequent where one man possessed such numerous flocks and herds, and carried on so extensive a husbandry. The greatest man in the land of Uz might easily have used his power and influence in such a case, but had ever refrained from doing so.

3. As much principle often required to abstain from taking advantage of our position and influence in a dispute with others, as to bestow a positive benefit. Jezebel's wickedness displayed in her counting upon her power with the elders and nobles in the court to obtain the vineyard of Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 7—13).

Closes the declaration of his humanity to the poor with an *imprecation* in case of guilt. Verse 22.—"Then let mine arm (the upper arm, from the elbow upwards) fall from the shoulder blade, and mine arm (the fore-arm, between the wrist and the elbow) be broken from the bone" (or upper arm to which it is attached). Reference to the whole of the preceding declaration in regard to his humanity to the poor, but more especially to the last-mentioned particular—"If I have lifted," &c. The punishment imprecated always corresponding with the offence supposed to have been committed. On the same principle, Cranmer held his right hand over the burning pile to be first consumed, as the member which had signed the recantation made against his conscience and against the truth. The penalty conceived justly to fall especially on the member or organ which was more especially concerned in the offence, Men convicted of theft among the Copts not unfrequently found with their hands cut off.

Adds a *reason* for his declared conduct.

Verse 23.—"For destruction from God was a terror unto me, and by reason of his highness, I could not endure" (either to commit the sin or meet His wrath). Similar sentiment expressed in verses 3 and 14. The reason given with reference to all the particulars of his conduct just mentioned, but more especially to the last. Observe—

The fear of God a good man's preservative against sin. Seen in the case of Joseph and Nehemiah as well as of Job. The consideration of God's displeasure against the sinner and the punishment threatened against the sin, *one* motive for resisting temptation and practising good, though not the highest. Rather the last source of defence against temptation when others fail. Better to abstain from sin and practice good, from hatred to sin itself and from love to God and good-doing, than from fear of His wrath. In Gospel exhortations to resist temptation and to do good, appeals rather made to the believer's gratitude for mercies received, to his position and privileges in Christ, and to the example of his Divine Master and Father, than to his fears of punishment and the Divine anger. Fear a right and important motive, but rather for the servant than the child. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry: Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). Yet a loving and right-minded child will fear to offend a father, even more than a servant fears to offend a master. Love a more powerful principle than fear; yet fear may be called in to help when love is not sufficiently strong in itself

V. Declares his freedom from idolatry both in its spiritual and external form, both secret and open, in heart and in life (verses 24—28). Specifies the two leading forms of idolatry—Mammonism and Sabæism—the trust in and love of *riches*, and the worship of idols in the ordinary sense of the word; here that of the *sun and moon*. The one the idolatry of the *heart*, the other that of the *outward act*. Job clears himself from both.

1. From *Mammonism*, or the trust in and love of riches. Verses 24, 25.—"If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much." (Note—the language of idolatry,—"Mine hand had gotten," instead of—"the Lord had given"—the language of a servant of God). Job abjures as forms of

Heart-Idolatry,

1. *Trust in riches.* Riches naturally and easily trusted in by an unrenewed heart. Money a defence (Eccles. vii. 12). Answereth all things (Eccles. x. 19). Trust apt to be placed in riches for happiness in general. More particularly—(1) For acquisition of the means of life and sources of enjoyment. (2) For defence against suffering and the assaults of others. (3) For power and position in the world. *Trust in money a common form of idolatry.* "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease," &c. Trust in Himself required by God from His intelligent creatures. That trust transferred to any other person or thing, in God's sight idolatry. Trust in riches contrasted in the Scriptures with trust in God (Ps. lii. 7; 1 Tim. vi. 17). The former characteristic of the ungodly; the latter, of the righteous. Believers cautioned not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God (1 Tim. vi. 17). Trust in riches incompatible with entrance into the kingdom of God (Mark x. 24). The rich man not to glory in his riches, but in the Lord (Jer. ix. 23, 24; 1 Cor i. 31). God and not riches to be trusted in for our daily bread. Hence the petition: "Give us this day," &c. Man's life not in the abundance of the things he possesses. Liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God (Matt. iv. 4). Riches not given to be trusted in, but to be employed by us as stewards, in the service of the Master and for the benefit of others as well as ourselves, in obedience to His will, and in dependence on His blessing.

To trust in riches instead of God not only wicked but *foolish*, as—(1) Riches are uncertain, and may soon and suddenly cease to be ours. (2) They are unable to render us either safe or happy even while we possess them. (3) They fail to meet the most important exigences of our nature as moral and responsible creatures. (4) They are unable to accompany us into another world.

The *possession* of riches to be distinguished from *trust* in them. Money well employed, a *blessing*; when allowed to usurp the place of God as our trust and confidence, a *curse*. The young man in the Gospel an example of trust in riches, notwithstanding a great appearance of piety and morality. Unable to give them up to follow Christ, because looking to *them* to make him happy rather than to God. A test as to whether we are trusting in riches—Am I ready cheerfully to give them up at God's will and for God's service? And, What proportion of my substance do I give for the extension of His kingdom, and the promotion of His cause in the world?

2. *Love of riches.* Job neither *trusted* in his wealth nor *rejoiced* in it. Riches a good,

but not the chief good. If riches increase, the heart not therefore to be set upon them (Ps. lxii. 10). Observe—(1) *Not money, but the love of it, the root of all evil* (1 Tim. vi. 10). A lawful, as well as an unlawful, rejoicing in our possessions (Deut. xii. 7; Eccles. ii. 7; iv. 26). Lawfully rejoiced in, when viewed not as what our own hand has gotten, but as what God has given; and not as given for our own exclusive enjoyment, but also for the benefit of others and the Master's service. Riches loved and idolized—(i.) When their acquisition and enjoyment afford us more pleasure and delight than the possession and enjoyment of God. (ii.) When we are more concerned about the acquisition and increase of them than about the enjoyment of God's favour and the advancement of His cause. (iii.) When we find it difficult to give up any considerable portion of them at God's will and for the promotion of His glory in the world. (2) *The love of money incompatible with the love of God* (Matt. vi. 24; 1 John ii. 15). Hence covetousness, or the love of riches, idolatry (Col. iii. 5; Eph. v. 5). Supreme love to God as the All-good, required of His intelligent creatures, as truly as as undivided trust in Him as the Almighty. (3) *Love of riches distinct from a proper appreciation of them.* Riches as merely possessed by us, a *blessing;* a *curse,* when they possess *us.* As a mere possession, they are worthless; as a means of doing good and glorifying God, invaluable.

Job's wealth not taken from him either for his *trust in* it or his *fondness of* it, any more than for his unlawful acquisition of it, or any evil use which he made of it.

Job taught by the Holy Spirit as well as by the light of nature, to view heart-idolatry, or the worship of riches, as heinous in God's sight as outward idolatry, or the worship of sun and moon. The view confirmed in the New Testament (Eph. v. 5).

2. Job equally abjures the *second* form of idolatry,—the worship of fictitious divinities, or of idols in the ordinary sense of the word, —here, that of the heavenly bodies, especially the *sun and moon.* Verses 26, 27.—"If I beheld the sun (*Heb.* 'light,'—a poetic name for the sun, which from its luminous atmosphere has been constituted a fountain of light to the earth and other planets), when it shined [in its glorious effulgence], or the moon walking in brightness (advancing like an orb of burnished silver in her course through the heavens); and my heart (the seat of the affections, and required in worship) hath been secretly [while I have outwardly been a worshipper of the only true God, and because afraid of the consequences of open idolatry,] enticed [by their appearance of majesty, glory, and beauty, and by the false views already beginning to be entertained regarding their divinity], or my mouth hath kissed my hand" [in token of my adoration of these luminaries (1 Kings xix. 5; Hos. xiii. 2)]; (*Heb.*, "My hand hath kissed my mouth"—the *heart* leading in the sin, and the *hand* following; inward affections being manifested by outward actions). The idolatry here indicated known as *Sabæism,* from the Hebrew word *Tsaba,* "a host," denoting the worship of the "host of heaven," or the heavenly bodies (Deut. xvii. 3; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3). Originally the worship of "light" or fire, and afterwards connected with that of the sun, moon, and stars, as its great reservoirs and sources as well as symbols. The heavenly bodies, especially the sun and moon, among the earliest objects of idolatrous worship. This form of idolatry especially prevalent in Chaldæa, where probably it had its origin. Babylon called the mother of harlots. The worship of the sun and moon an early form of Arabian idolatry. The moon the great divinity of the ancient Arabians. Still an object of great veneration with Mahommedans. Hence the symbol of the Crescent. The Caaba at Mecca originally a temple dedicated to the moon. Abraham's relatives and neighbours in Chaldæa addicted to this form of idolatry. His place of residence—"Ur of the Chaldees," probably so called from *Ur,* "fire;" or from *Or,* "light." At Mugheir, believed by some to be its modern representative, the ruins have been discovered of a temple dedicated to the moon, and resembling that of the sun at Babylon.

These luminaries worshipped originally as representatives of deity, then as deities themselves. Viewed as the great prolific powers in the universe, and the bestowers of all earthly blessings.

The worship of the sun and moon ultimately that of almost the whole known world. Prevalent among our own ancestors. The names of the first and second days of the week, monuments of its existence among the Anglo-Saxons. Temples of Apollo or the sun, and of Diana or the moon, formerly stood in London, the one on the site of Westminster Abbey, the other on that of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The object of Jehovah in making Israel his elect nation to preserve them from the practice of this idolatry, and thus to have witnesses for Himself and His truth in the world (Deut. iv. 19, 20). The practice of it in Israel's degeneracy the cause of their captivity in Babylon (Ezek. viii. 16; 2 Kings xxiii. 5, 11). Observe—(1) *Fallen humanity prone to put the creature in the place of the*

Creator. Early lost the true idea and knowledge of God through departure from and alienation to Him. "Did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. i. 28). Hence objects remarkable either for majesty, beauty or utility, worshipped in His stead. The source and essence of idolatry (Rom. i. 25). (2) *Difficult for fallen human nature to use the creature without abusing it.* Objects of nature to be viewed, not with idolatrous fondness or admiration of the creature, but with admiration, love, and praise to the Creator. Nature to lead up to nature's God, not away from Him. Indication of idolatry in man, when

"The landscape has his praise, but not its Author."

(3) A mark of advanced enlightenment, that Job mentions with the same breath, trust in and love of riches, with the worship of the heavenly bodies, as equally idolatrous and offensive in the sight of God. (4) In Job's time the knowledge and worship of the true God greatly on the decrease; yet His faithful worshippers still to be found. "Left not himself without witness" (Acts xiv. 17).

Job's *reason* for abstaining from idolatry either in its spiritual or external forms. Verse 28.—"This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge (or, 'a judicial iniquity;' idolatry still in Job's days considered a punishable crime; afterwards, by the law of Moses, to be punished with death, Deut. xvii. 2–7); for I should have denied ('lied to' or against) the God that is above" (in place, power, dignity, and excellence). Observe—

1. *The heinousness of a sin to be a principal reason for its avoidance.*

2. *That heinousness to be especially seen in its relation to God.*

3. *Trust in and love of riches, as well as the external worship of a created object or image, a denial of the true God.* All idolatry a denial of God. (1) In the boundless excellence of His being. (2) In the spirituality of His nature. (3) In His infinity and omnipresence. (4) In His moral as well as natural perfections. (5) In His sufficiency for our happiness and safety. (6) In His sole right to the trust, love, and worship of His intelligent creatures.

4. *God not only denied by our words, but by our works.*

5. *All trust in and worship of the creature, a lie against God.* A lie in the right hand of every idol-worshipper, whether of man, money, or of the sun and moon (Is. xliv. 20).

VI. Denies all vindictiveness in reference to enemies. Verses 29, 30.—"If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself (in exultation or insult) when evil found him; neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul" (or, by asking for his life, *i.e.*, the removal of it in an imprecation). Observe—

1. *Even a good man not without enemies.* Hatred from the world promised by Christ to His disciples (Matt. x. 22). A blessing pronounced on those who, for His sake, experience it (Luke vi. 22). A woe on those of whom all men speak well (Luke vi. 26). Hatred from the world a consequence of not being of it (John xv. 19). Christ Himself the great object of the world's hatred (John xv. 18). The ground of that hatred his testimony against its works (John vii. 7). Those spared the world's hatred who partake of its character (John vii. 7). "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the law, contend with him" (Prov. xxviii. 4). Hence the enmity of the wicked against the good. This enmity experienced by Job.

2. *A good man known by his conduct towards his enemies.* The mark of an unregenerate heart to cherish ill-will against an enemy or to take pleasure in his misfortune. Hatred of a foe the prompting of fallen nature and the spirit of heathenism. "Revenge is sweet,"—the language of the Great Murderer. To rejoice in the fall of an enemy, the sin of the Edomites in relation to Israel and the cause of their punishment (Obadiah 12, 13). The sin forbidden in Prov. xxiv. 17. The contrary disposition enjoined both in the Old and New Testaments (Prov. xxv. 21; Rom. xii. 20). Christ's command to his followers, not only not to rejoice in the evil that overtakes an enemy, but to pray for and promote his welfare (Matt. v. 44). *Noble minds rejoice in the opportunity of befriending a foe.* Instances recorded even of the heathen returning kindness for insult. Pericles having been followed to his door by one who had been railing against him, offered him his servant to light him home. Augustus invited to supper the poet Catullus after he had been railing against him. Nothing more common among men than vindictiveness, and nothing more contemptible. *Our best revenge on an enemy is to forgive him and treat him kindly.* To wish evil to him who hates us makes us as bad, or worse, than himself. The New Testament rule in such cases,—"Overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). In accordance with His own precept, Christ prayed for his murderers (Luke xxiii. 34). Commissioned His heralds of mercy to begin with those who had clamoured for His blood (Luke xxiv. 47). His spirit and conduct imitated by His followers. The first Christian

martyr died with a prayer on his lips for those who were stoning him to death (Acts vii. 60). Job's religion afterwards embodied in the Gospel. Though living in the patriarchal age, Job exemplified the spirit of Christianity. The new commandment only a new edition of the old. An advance however in the moral teaching of the New Testament as compared with that of the Old. Job instructed not to hate an enemy; the Christian taught to love him. Christianity teaches not only not to wish a curse to an enemy, but to pray for a blessing to him.

3. *The teaching of God's Spirit and the character of God's children always essentially the same.* That teaching and character a transcript of His own nature. God's example that of forgiveness and kindness to enemies. The carnal mind enmity to God. Mankind enemies to God in their mind by wicked works (Rom. viii. 7; Col. i. 21).

4. *Special guard to be placed upon the mouth.* A sinful thought or feeling not to be allowed utterance. To be *sup*pressed instead of being *ex*pressed. An aggravation of sin in the heart to give it expression with the lips. Bodily organs not to be employed as the instruments of sin.

VII. Job declares his humanity as a householder (verses 31, 32).

1. In his kindness to his *domestics and inmates.* Verse 31—"If the men of my tabernacle (those residing under his roof, whether as domestics, retainers, or other inmates,) said not, Oh, that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied" (or, "Who is there that was was not satisfied with his flesh?"—*i.e.*, with his hospitality, 1 Sam. xxv. 11; or, according to some ancient versions, "If they said, Who will give us of his flesh, that we may be satisfied," as complaining of not having sufficient food, or longing for the better supplies on his own table). Job able to appeal to his own domestics and the inmates of his dwelling for evidence of his humanity, more especially of his bounty to them and his liberality to others. No niggard in his own house. Treated his servants not only with justice, but kindness. Gave them not only food, but of the best kind, and plenty of it. Made them sharers of the best that was on his own table. Had no feast but they partook of it. Observe—(1) *A good man will be kind and liberal to his domestics* (Col. iv. 1). (2) *Well when, as masters, we can appeal to our servants for our character, and when they can bear an honest testimony in our favour.* Servants and inmates of our house, likely to be the best judges of our character and conduct. (3) *Good to make our house a home for others as well as ourselves.* A Christian duty to "bring the poor that are cast out to our house" (Isa. lviii. 7). "I was a stranger and ye took me in" (Matt xxv. 35). Job's house never without the objects of his charity. The widow and the fatherless, the stranger and the destitute, frequent guests at his table. Note—Customary for wealthy Arabs to slaughter sheep or camels for the supply of their household. "Broad dishes" the glory of an Arab chief, as necessary for the entertainment of his guests.

2. In his hospitality to *travellers.* Verse 32—"The stranger did not lodge in the street (for want of a house to receive him, it being difficult to obtain accommodation in Oriental towns and villages *then*, as it is still, except with the sheikh or a Christian); but I opened my doors to the traveller" (or, as *margin*, "to the way," as if to invite and welcome the traveller passing by). Pleasing picture of Oriental manners, corresponding with those of patriarchal times (Gen. xviii. 1—4; xix. 1, &c.). Job an example of the New Testament precept—"Use hospitality *without grudging*" (1 Peter iv. 9). "Given to hospitality," more than merely "showing" it (Rom. xii. 13). "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,"—not merely your relatives or acquaintances (Heb. xiii. 2).

VIII. Clears himself from secret and concealed transgressions. Verses 33, 34.—"If I covered my transgressions as Adam (in allusion to Gen. iii. 8; or, 'like men,' as Hos. vi. 7—as men are wont to do after the example of their first father), by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom (from impenitence or hypocrisy, or both): Did I fear a great multitude (or, 'because I feared,' &c.; or as an imprecation—'Then let me fear,' &c.), or did the contempt of families (or tribes) terrify me (so as to conceal my sin or neglect my duty to the stranger; or, 'because the contempt, &c., terrified me;' or, 'let the contempt, &c., terrify or crush me'), that I kept silence [instead of acknowledging my transgression, or opening my mouth in behalf of the oppressed stranger,—like Lot, Gen. xix. 6—8, or the old man of Gibeah, Judges xix. 22—24], and went not out of the door?" (for fear of detection, or to avoid the danger and self-denial connected with my duty to the stranger; or, as continuing the imprecation, "let me be silent," &c.). Observe—

1. The best not free from transgressions, both against God and men. Job a perfect man, yet acknowledges transgressions. "Not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20).

2. Natural to men to conceal their transgressions. Adam's conduct imitated by all his children (Gen. iii. 8).

3. Men with much outward morality and religion may still be guilty of secret sins. The case with the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of the Saviour. Job more than suspected of it by his friends. Hence his concern now to clear himself of such hypocrisy.

4. The fear of man often more powerful in leading men to conceal their guilt, than the fear of God in leading them to confess it. The ungodly more afraid of man's shame than of God's wrath.

5. Just that secret crimes should be followed by popular contempt and ignominy as their penalty. A day coming when secret transgressors, who have successfully covered their crimes in this life, will awake to "shame and everlasting contempt" in the next (Daniel xii. 3).

6. A good man has no need either to fear the populace or shun the public eye. A good conscience a man's best armour. "Be just and fear not."

7. A good man more afraid of God's displeasure than of man's contempt. The sin of men, that they are more afraid of man and the "multitude" than of their Maker. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the Son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" (Is. li. 12, 13). "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. x. 23).

8. The part of an honest and sincere heart, to confess transgressions both before God, and, when necessary, before man. A Christian's first duty, to confess his transgressions to God; his next, to confess them to man if he has injured or offended him. "Confess your faults one to another," a New Testament precept (James v. 16). Confession *to* God necessary to forgiveness *from* God (Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 8, 9; Ps. xxxii. 3—5). Frank confession a mark of true repentance. Examples: Zaccheus (Luke xix. 8); the penitent thief (Luke xxiii. 41); the converts of Ephesus (Acts xix. 18, 19).

9. A good man not deterred from duty, either by the fear of numbers or the contempt of neighbours. Example: Lot in Sodom (Gen. xix). Milton's famous picture of the Seraph Abdiel—

"Faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified.
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single."

VIII. Job's final desire and challenge. Verses 35—37.—"O that one would hear me! (or 'O that I had one to hear me!'—an impartial judge or umpire in the controversy between the Almighty and himself, so that his case might be fairly tried and decided upon). Behold, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me (or, 'here is my mark' or signature, *i.e.*, to the declaration he made of his innocence—'let the Almighty answer me,' and prove me guilty if He can); and that my adversary had written a book (or, 'and let mine adversary write a book' or bill of indictment against me, as in courts of law; or, 'and [O that I had] the book [or indictment which] mine adversary has written against me!) Surely I would take it upon my shoulder (as a thing of which I was not ashamed, but which I was willing that every one should see and know), and bind it as a crown to me (as a thing in which I rather gloried as my honour and ornament, being persuaded that all the charges contained in it would be found to be groundless). I would declare unto him (viz., the umpire or judge) the number of my steps (all the various passages of my life); as a prince—(with the boldness and confidence of an innocent man assured of coming off victorious, instead of the faltering step and downcast look of a culprit) would I go near unto him" (instead of avoiding him like Adam in the garden, as conscious of guilt).

This lofty passage is, perhaps, the strongest declaration of his innocence that Job had yet made, probably intended as the *finale* of his pleadings, and the climax of his protestations. The three following verses, with the exception of the last clause, probably standing originally somewhere before the present passage; or, what is less likely, as a still farther vindication of his character.

The passage stands as a proof of his conscious integrity. Expresses his continued desire to have a fair and impartial hearing of his case, with the conviction that he would be declared free from the sins which were either openly or by implication charged upon him, and from any such transgressions as to merit his present sufferings. The adversary with whom he wishes to contest the matter, mainly God himself who seemed to treat him as a guilty person. His three friends also his adver-

saries, but only as taking up the view of his character which God himself seemed to take from the way in which He was now dealing with him. God seemed to have charges against him of which he was entirely unconscious. His friends declared that such charges must exist. Job denied there there was any ground for them. Hence his great desire that the matter may be fairly examined into and decided.

This desire of Job, now soon about to be granted, and that in his favour. Not however to be done till he has been taught some necessary and important lessons. Though having the truth on his side in the controversy, his spirit and language not always what they ought to have been. His error in declaring his innocence in too decided a manner, and in carrying his declaration almost, if not altogether, to the point of self-confident glorying and self-righteous pride. At times not only bitter in his spirit and language towards his three friends, but petulant and irreverent towards God. The present winding up of his speeches sounded like a declaration that *he* was righteous, whatever God might be in the matter; in other words, that he was more righteous than God. Too much overlooked the fact—(1) That he, in common with all mankind, was guilty before God, and had given sufficient occasion to be visited with stripes even more severe than those from which he was now suffering; (2) That God is infinitely holy, just, and good, and would do nothing with any of His creatures but what was perfectly right; (3) That God might have wise objects in view in dealing with him as He did, which, though now hidden from him, He in His own time would show—as, for example, his own purification, God employing his sufferings as the goldsmith does the furnace for purifying the gold; (4) That God, as Creator, has the right to do with His creatures as He pleases, without doing anything either unjust or unkind, and that it is the creature's part to be passive and submissive in His hand—Job's actual conduct at the beginning of his trials.

The steps between this last speech of Job's and the declaration of his integrity on the part of the Almighty, occupied in correcting these errors, and in bringing him to a juster view of himself, and to a better state of mind in regard to God. Observe:—

1. ***No flesh allowed to glory in God's presence*** (1 Cor. i. 29). One of the great objects of the Bible to teach men this truth. The proper place for fallen man before God, even at his best, is the dust. Tendency to pride in the best. Imperfection stamped on all human excellence. Like Moses, Job speaks unadvisedly with his lips. Utters what is rash before God, which he afterwards repents in dust and ashes. Not yet the perfect man who "offendeth not in word" (James iii. 2).

2. *Only one way of going near to God as our judge with boldness and confidence.* Not that of Job, as in ourselves righteous and innocent; but as sinners, accepting of and trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ as the only ground of our acceptance before God (Heb. x. 22.) "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness. In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory" (Is. xlv. 24, 25).

IX. Job finally clears himself of injustice in his business transactions with his fellow-men. (Verses 38—40).—"If my land (probably the land which, like Isaac, he rented and cultivated for his own use) cry against me (as dishonestly acquired or oppressively cultivated,—like Abel's innocent blood shed by his brother's hand. Gen. iv. 10), or that the furrows likewise thereof complain (*Hebrew*, 'weep together,' as in sympathy with one another, and with the owners whom I have wronged by occupying their land without paying duly for its use, or with the labourers whom I have oppressed by employing them without a fair remuneration for their work;—a beautiful and bold personification to increase the effect): if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money (in payment either to the proprietor for the occupancy of his land, or to the labourer for his work in cultivating it), or have caused the owners thereof to lose their lives (either directly by violent means in order to obtain their property, or indirectly by withholding the just payment for its occupancy): let thistles (or thorns) grow instead of wheat, and cockle (or noxious weeds) instead of barley." Observe—

1. *One of the most testing points in reference to a man's character, how he carries on his business and conducts his transactions with his fellow-men.* Constant temptation to over-reach and take advantage. Tendency in fallen human nature both to withhold from others their just due, and to exact more than our own. The business principles of the world often the reverse of those of the Bible. That of "Buy cheap and sell dear," liable to be carried out to the extent of fraud and extortion. Christianity and sound morality teach us to give every man a fair price for his labour or his goods, and to ask no more than a fair price for our own. The maxim, "Business is business," sinful if understood as meaning that business is

exempted from the same rules of morality as are applied to other branches of conduct. *Defectiveness in commercial morality one of the sins of the day.* In the race for riches, men tempted, even in a Christian land, to commit the sins which Job here solemnly abjures—receiving labour, goods, or money, without giving a just equivalent. The temptation not always resisted, to sell articles that are something different from what they are represented to be. The severe reproof of the Almighty directed in the Bible against those who oppress the hireling of their wages (Mal. iii. 5; James v. 4). A woe pronounced on him "who buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work," (Jer. xxii. 13).

2. *Even professedly religious men tempted to follow the world in untruthful and unfair modes of conducting business.* The practice of overreaching and extortion apparently prevalent in Job's time and country. Extortion on the part of rulers, proprietors, and dealers in the East, notorious. The practice of a Turk or Arab in demanding an exorbitant price for his goods, as common as that of the governor or employer in giving the merest pittance for the labourer's work. Extortion and excess among the prevailing sins of the Pharisees in the days of the Saviour (Matt. xxiii. 25). Job careful to resist the temptation to a common sin. Renounced filthy gain. No canker in his gold and silver. No rust on his money to witness against him either here or hereafter, and to eat his flesh as it were fire (James v. 3). Had neither sought to buy cheaper nor sell dearer than justice and humanity demanded.

3. *Dishonesty found on the side of buyers as well as of sellers.* (1). In not paying duly for goods delivered; (2). In depreciating and cheapening down an article, in order to get a bargain, or to obtain it at a price below its value. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Prov. xx, 14).

4. *The mark of a true servant of God, to be "faithful in that which is least."*

5. *The part of a follower of Christ, to commend his Master's religion by exhibiting a sterling morality in his daily life.* "What soever things are true, honest, just, lovely, and of good report," &c. (Phil iv. 8).

6. *Murder committed in more ways than one.* Indirect as well as direct murder. The life blood of the poor may be drained by oppressive work and inadequate remuneration. Hearts broken by fraud and oppression in *civil*, as well as by inhumanity and cruelty in *domestic* life.

7. *Wrong done to another often recompensed by loss incurred by ourselves.* A curse imprecated by Job on his land as the righteous penalty of wrong, if done by him either in acquiring or cultivating it. Another example of the maxim: As the sin, so the punishment. Job probably reminded of the curse pronounced on the ground, first for Adam's sin and then for Cain's (Gen. iii. 17, 18; iv, 11, 12). Suggests another evidence that Job was well acquainted with Genesis.

"The words of Job are ended." Probably followed the final protestation of his innocence in verse 37. Job's "words" spoken partly by the flesh and partly by the spirit. Were partly those of an enlightened and sanctified believer, and partly those of a yet unhumbled sinner. Were at last partly commended and partly reproved by the Almighty. Have been recorded for our instruction and comfort, but not all of them for our imitation. Began with justifying and speaking well of God; ended by speaking well of himself. Contain some of the most elevated sentiments and glorious truths ever conceived by human mind or uttered by human lips. Viewed in connection with his extraordinary sufferings, and the circumstances in which they were uttered, they exhibit a marvel of Divine grace, in enabling the sufferer to possess his soul in patience, and "to glorify God in the fires." Afford the picture of a man as perfect as fallen nature admitted of in the ages previous to the advent of Christ and the dispensation of the Spirit. Observe—*Words ended in their utterance not ended in their effect.* By these words of Job, he "being dead yet speaketh." The effect of words, for good or evil, often experienced for generations and centuries after they have been spoken or written.

"Nothing is lost: the drop of dew,
That trembles on the leaf or flower,
Is but exhaled to fall anew,
In summer's thunder shower;
Perchance to shine within the bow,
That fronts the sun at fall of day;
Perchance to sparkle in the flow
Of fountains far away.
So with our words; or harsh or kind,
Utter'd, they are not all forgot:
But leave some trace upon the mind,
Pass on, yet perish not."

J. Critchlq Prince

CHAPTER XXXII.

INTRODUCTION AND SPEECH OF ELIHU.

The place of Elihu, introduced in this chapter, that of an umpire stepping forward of his own accord, under the promptings of zeal and conscious knowledge, to decide the controversy between Job and his three friends on the one hand, and between Job and the Almighty on the other. His speeches contribute to the solution, as showing reasons why Job might be afflicted as he was, without being what his friends suspected him to be—a secretly bad man, and also as pointing out wherein he erred—namely, in his too strongly justifying himself, and almost censuring the Almighty. His speeches preparatory to the appearance and address of Jehovah, who follows up what Elihu had begun. Elihu in relation to the Almighty, like John the Baptist in relation to Christ. Observe—(1) An honour to be, like Elihu, a *peacemaker*, in seeking to compose disputes between brethren, and to remove a believer's controversy with God. (2) A high privilege to be, like Elihu also, a *forerunner* in preparing the way for God himself. Precious to be sent, like the seventy disciples, to preach in places where Christ himself is to come (Luke x. 1).

I. The occasion of Elihu's introduction. Verse 1.—"So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes."

The great object of these friends, to make Job out to be a secret transgressor, and so deserving the sufferings inflicted on him. This view of his case required by their false theology in respect to the Divine government—God viewed by them as necessarily punishing sin and rewarding virtue in this life. Failing to convince Job that he was a bad man, and guilty of such sins as had justly drawn upon him God's severe judgments, they "ceased to answer Job." Their arguments only in the direction of showing that bad men suffer in this life the consequences of their deeds, however secretly committed, and that good men are invariably prosperous and happy, even in this world. They had employed the last arrow in their quiver without making any impression, and now desist.

Their final charge against Job,—"He was righteous in his own eyes," partly false and partly true. False, as Job acknowledged himself a sinner (ch. vii, 20, 21; ix. 2, 3).

1. In a *right* sense. In the ordinary use of the term, Job a "righteous" man. This the Divine testimony given of him. The testimony also of his own conscience. His own heart "condemned him not." Conscious of having served God sincerely, earnestly, and perseveringly. Like Paul, could testify that he had "lived in all good conscience unto this day." Had exercised himself in having "a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men." With this consciousness, Job necessarily and justly "righteous in his own eyes." Could not truthfully deny it, or honestly confess the contrary. So far Job simply believed and maintained he was righteous, because he *was* so. As a matter of fact, Job's sins *not* the cause of his sufferings (ch. ii. 3).

2. In a *wrong* sense. (1) As insisting too strongly on his own righteousness. (2) In ignoring or regarding too slightly the sins that actually adhered to him. (3) In being too prone to charge God with cruelty and injustice in dealing with him as He did. (4) In being much more careful to justify himself than his Maker. His eye so entirely on his own integrity and uprightness as to overlook and forget his short-comings and offences against the Divine law. Righteous before men, he failed to see and acknowledge himself, as he ought, guilty before God. Job still very much in the condition of Paul before his journey to Damascus—"alive without the law" (Rom. vii. 9). The commandment was yet to "come," in order to his dying in his own eyes as a sinner, and having his mouth stopped as guilty before God (Rom iii. 19). Job yet to learn and realize more deeply than he had yet done, that in God's sight no man living can be justified (Ps. cxliii. 2). This change in his views and experience soon about to take place. What the three friends failed in doing, God Himself was about to accomplish, first and in part through the instrumentality of Elihu; afterwards and more especially, by the manifestation of Himself (ch. xlii. 5, 6). Observe—(1) *Possible to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men, and yet to require to be humbled as a sinner before God.* (2) *One of the objects of the law of God, to strip men of self-righteousness.* By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. iii., 20; vii. 7). (3) *One great aim in the Holy Spirit's mission into the world, to convince men of sin and of a better righteousness than their own, in order to their accep-*

tance with God (John xvi. 7, 10). What was to be done in Job's case by the appearance of God Himself and the ministry of Elihu, now done by the inward operation of the Holy Ghost and the ministry of the word. (4). *Self-righteousness the great enemy to our peace, as well as to our acceptance, before God through the righteousness wrought out for us by the Son of God in our nature* (Rom. x. 34; Phil. iii. 4, 9).

II. Elihu's Personality (verse 26).

1. His NAME—"Elihu." Denotes—"my God is he," or, "my God is Jehovah." Given at his birth, implies piety on the part of his parents. His name a profession of the faith of his parents, and probably intended to be that of his own. Elihu constantly reminded of the true God by his very name. Probably given him to serve as a guard against advancing idolatry. That object gained. Much in a name. More meaning in names given to individuals, and more importance attached to them, in early times and in the East, than now and with ourselves. Scripture names generally significant. Observe—(1) Wise in parents to impress Divine truth by every suitable means on the minds of their children from their earliest years and to keep God before them as they grow up. (2) Not enough to know that Jehovah is the true God, but that He is *our* God. God is to be appropriated as our own God in Christ. "My God," the language of faith and love,—"O God thou art my God" (Ps. lxiii. 1). The first confession of Christ after his resurrection: "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28). Such appropriation of God and self-consecration to Him, the will of God concerning us (Jer. iii. 4, 19, 22). In the covenant of grace, of God gives Himself over to the believing sinner as his God in Christ (Jer. xxxi. 33; Heb. viii. 10).

2. His PARENTAGE. "Son of Barachel." Elihu the only individual in the poem whose parentage is recorded. Possibly in order to distinguish him from others of the same name, or because his father was a well-known and distinguished man in the country. Possibly because Elihu was yet a young man, and required thus to be distinguished. The addition of the father's name the ordinary way of naming men in the East, except when the party was advanced in years, or a person of great distinction. The name of Elihu's father significant as well as his own. Denotes—"the blessing of God," or "God hath blessed." God's goodness and blessing probably recognized by his parents in the gift of a son. Well to mark God's hand in in our ordinary mercies. Piety not only in Elihu's parents but his grand-parents. A precious blessing to have a pious ancestry. —*The privilege of all in Christ to be a "Barachel."* God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i. 3). Barachel, having realized the blessing expressed in his name, the more anxious that his son should do the same, and should be able to say: "The Lord is my God." Hence called him Elihu. Parents enjoying the blessing of a covenant-God themselves likely to be made a blessing to their children. Elihu the worthy son of a worthy father. "Grace does not run in the blood, but often runs in the line."—*P. Henry.* Elihu distinguished for his piety and wisdom even while a young man. Reflected honour on the father whose name was connected with his own. Only truly pious children a real credit and honour to their parents. "My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine" (Prov. xxiii. 15).

3. His COUNTRY. "The Buzite." Buz the second son of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. xxii. 21). A city of this name in Arabia Deserta, mentioned in connection with Dedan in Idumæa (Jer. xxv. 13). The name of the city and the country around probably derived from Buz, Nahor's son. Buz himself a Syrian. Probably some of his descendants emigrated south-westwards into Idumæa or Arabia. Buz a brother of Uz, from whom the country of Job probably took its name. Job and Elihu thus perhaps not very distantly connected. The Syrians in general already tinged more or less with idolatry. Hence the command to Abraham to leave his country and his kindred. Idols or images, probably kept as household gods, found in the family of Laban, Nahor's grandson (Gen. xxxi. 19). Strange gods worshipped by Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor (Josh. xxiv. 2, 15). Barachel probably an exception. Hence the piety and wisdom of his son. Due to sovereign grace, that generally some are "among the faithless, faithful found." Saints in Nero's household.

4. His KINDRED. "Of the kindred (or clan) of Ram." Ram probably the same as Aram (1 Chron. xxix. 10, with Matt. i. 3, 4). Ram or Aram a son of Shem, and the father or brother of Uz (Gen. x. 23; 1 Chron. i. 17). Another, the son of Kemuel the son of Nahor, and the brother of Buz and Uz (Gen. xxii. 21). A third and later Ram or Aram, the father of Amminadab and grandfather of Nahshon, the prince of the children of Judah at the time of the Exodus (1 Chron. ii. 9—10; Num. i. 7, 2, 3). From Ram or Aram, Syria had its name Mesopotamia, the country between the rivers—namely, the Tigris and the Euphrates, also hence called Padan-Aram, or the Plain of Aram. Hence the Syriac and Chaldaic

language called the Aramaic, traces of which appear in the Book of Job, but more especially in the speeches of Elihu.—This particularity in the description of Elihu significant, as—(1) An evidence of the historic truth of the poem; (2) Indicative of the important place he occupies in the controversy, and the part he contributed to its solution; (3) Expressive of the honour put upon Elihu himself as the most enlightened of the speakers. "Them that honour me I will honour."

5. His AGE. "Young." Probably even younger than Job. A remarkable peculiarity in his case. The other speakers elderly, and even aged men (verse 6). Unusual in Arabia and the East for young men to take part in a religious controversy. Observe — *Grace and wisdom not confined to age.* John the most beloved and devoted of the Apostles, believed to have been the youngest, Paul, when chosen to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, a young man; Timothy, his friend and deputy while but a youth. Jesus among the doctors in the temple at the age of twelve. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, distinguished for piety and wisdom at an early age.

III. Elihu's Character. To be gathered from the history and from his own speeches.

1. *Ardent and zealous.* Hence his anger both against Job and his three friends (verse 2), and his eager endeavour to correct their mistakes. Full of matter, and eager to deliver himself of it (verses 18, 19).

2. *Modest.* Conscious of his youth, he waits till all the other speakers had nothing more to say (verses 4, 11). Hesitating and afraid to deliver his opinion (verse 6). Spoke at length, only because inwardly constrained to do so, and conscious of having something to say on the subject (verse 18). Ascribes what knowledge and understanding he had to the Spirit of God (verse 8). The appearance of inflation in his language probably due to Oriental poetry, and to the apologetic style which he assumes in introducing himself.

3. *Enlightened.* Indicated in his speeches. Answered neither by Job nor his friends. The only speaker not censured by the Almighty. Jehovah's address to Job a continuation of his own.

4. *Candid and impartial.* Neither justifies Job, though desirous of doing so; nor yet, like the three friends, suspects and condemns him as necessarily a wicked man. Speaks his mind, without either fear or favour, as amenable to his Maker (verses 21, 22). Reproves Job, without, like the others, losing his temper.

Elihu may be viewed—(1) As, in character, name, and the attitude he assumes in the controversy, a type of Christ in relation to the Pharisees and doctors of the law, as well as in his office of mediator and revealer of the Father; (2) As, in his character and speeches, an example to pastors and preachers of the Gospel.

IV. His motives and reasons for entering into the controversy.

1. *His displeasure with Job and his three friends.* Verses 2, 3.—"Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu (Oriental expression for strong disapprobation and displeasure); against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God (or, "made himself more righteous than God"). Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had no answer [to Job which was solid and satisfactory], and yet had condemned Job" (as a hypocrite and secret transgressor). Elihu, angry with Job for his offence against God; with his friends for their offence against Job.

Observe—*anger, not always sinful.* "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Eph. iv. 26.) Anger may be either holy or unholy. Shewn by God Himself. God "angry with the wicked every day." Felt and exhibited by Christ. "Looked round about" upon his Pharisaic adversaries and opposers "with anger" (Mark iii. 5). Anger a principle or passion implanted in our nature for wise and holy objects. Only right when—(1) *Directed against a proper object.* This not always the case with creature anger. (2) *Excited by a just or sufficient cause.* Human anger often excited by a *bad* cause, still more frequently by an *insufficient* one. Jonah first angry at Nineveh's repentance, and then at the loss of his gourd. (3) *Held under due control.* Uncontrolled anger a sinful passion—a sin itself, and leading to many others. (4) *Accompanied with love.* Jesus wept over the objects of His anger (Luke xix. 41). (5) *Not long continued.* "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. iv. 26). Anger may *enter* the breast of a wise man, but *rests* only in the bosom of fools (Eccles vii. 9). Anger in fallen creatures apt to be sinful. Hence spoken of as a work of the flesh (Gal. v. 25). Believers exhorted to put it away (Eph. iv. 31). Anger in fallen men like gunpowder in the hands of children—useful but dangerous. Often sinful even in good men. Excluded Moses, though the meekest man on earth, from the promised land (Num. xx. 10, 12). Anger safest when directed against the sin rather than the sinner. Causeless anger murder in the heart, and often leading to murder in the act. Excessive anger a species

of madness. The New Testament rule—"Slow to speak, slow to wrath." "Not soon angry," a precept necessary both for ministers and people. One feature of charity or love, that it is "not easily provoked (1 Cor. xiii. 5).

2. *The inability of the three friends to answer Job.* Verse 3—"They had found no answer." Verse 16—"Therefore I said, hearken unto me; I also will shew mine opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons (your arguments, or your views; *Margin,* 'your understandings'), whilst (or till) ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you (or 'to your testimonies'), and behold, there was none of you that convinced Job (refuted or convicted him of error), or that answered his words" (solidly, suitably, and satisfactorily). Verse 15—"They (*i.e.*, Job's friends,—the words addressed to Job, or to others present at the controversy as by-standers), were amazed ('struck down,' either by Job's arguments, his confidence in God, or his obstinacy in maintaining his innocence), they left off speaking. When I had waited (or simply, 'I waited'—spoken after an interval of silence, leaving room for remark), for (or but) they spake not, but stood still (persevered in their silence, or stood as dumb), and answered no more; I said, I will also [though so much younger] answer my part (will contribute my part to the controversy); I also will show my opinion." Becoming in juniors to be silent in a discussion, till others, older and likely to be better informed on the subject, have said what they are able to say upon it. Modesty an ornament to all, but especially to youth. "Slow to speak," in most cases a safe rule. Jesus among the doctors, first *heard*, then asked questions, and then gave answers.

3. *The general bestowment of understanding by the Creator on mankind.* Verse 7.—"I said, days (men of advanced age) should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom (understanding as to God's dealings and man's duty). But there is a spirit in man (mankind in general, without being confined to age), and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men (great either in age or position) are not always wise; neither do the aged (necessarily or exclusively) understand judgment (what is right either in doctrine or duty). Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion." Observe: (1) *To speak on great and important subjects connected with Divine truth, the especial right and duty of men of age and experience.* Growth in wisdom naturally expected to accompany growth in years. (2) *Wisdom not the monopoly of any age or class.* (3). *Intelligence the gift of God.* Christ the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John i. 9). (4) *A preacher to speak in dependence on, and as the result of, Divine enlightenment.* "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." The manifestation of the Spirit given to every [believing] man to profit [others] withal (1 Cor. xii., 7; 1 Pet. iv. 11. Three things necessary for every preacher of Divine truth—(1) A message given him by the Spirit. (2) The unction of the Spirit in delivering it. (3) The power of the Spirit to accompany it in the hearts of the hearers.

4. *His conviction, in opposition to the self-conceit of the three friends, that the subject under discussion was capable of receiving a more satisfactory treatment.* Verse 13—"Lest ye should say (or 'do not say'), We have found out wisdom; God casteth him down, and not man" (his afflictions are to be viewed as coming in righteous judgment from the hand of God, and not from man; or, "God must confute or overcome him and not man.") Either the language of the friends, as if they had said all that could be advanced on the subject, Job being now incorrigible to all but God himself; or the language of Elihu, as indicating that what he was about to advance was not the mere argument of man, but the teaching of God himself, by whose inspiration he was about to speak. "We have found out wisdom," generally the language of ignorance and pride, as if we ourselves had seen the whole truth in relation to a subject, and nothing more could be said about it. The language of many of the philosophers or wise men of antiquity. "Professing themselves to be wise." The name "philosopher," however, denoting a *lover of wisdom*, chosen in modesty by Pythagoras its inventor, to indicate, in opposition to many who called themselves "wise men," that wisdom was not yet found out, and that all that men could pretend to, was to be lovers or seekers of it; while both Socrates and Plato acknowledged the necessity of a Divine revelation, and anticipated the bestowment of it at some future period. "We have found out wisdom," still the language of a 'vain philosophy,' and of 'science falsely so called.' The boast of some modern as well as of ancient schools Especially made at present in reference to the origin of man and of the universe. 'Natural Selection' to take the place of a personal and intelligent Creator. The Bible account of creation to be set aside, according to some, for the teachings or guessings of science, which yet is obliged to confess that it neither does nor can know anything certain on the subject. "I say," says one of those who think they have 'found out wisdom' on this subject, "that

natural knowledge, seeking to satisfy natural wants, has found the ideas which alone can satisfy spiritual cravings." On a subject, in regard to which science professes it has and can have no evidence and can give no certain account, on which its teachings are far from being in harmony with each other, and one connected with matters of infinite and eternal importance,—it would seem not a little wiser to accept the professed and sufficiently-accredited Divine testimony, however it is to be intrepreted, which has been preserved and handed down to us through nearly four thousand years; which has been received as such by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and by the best men in every age, both before and since, who have had the opportunity of doing so; and is infinitely more calculated to meet the wants and circumstances of humanity, than the theory or guesses which some professors of science would give us in its stead.

5. *His having hitherto stood aloof from the controversy, and having arguments to produce which had not yet been advanced.* Verse 14. —"Now he (Job) hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches" (either as to the matter or manner of them). Elihu proposes—(1) To bring new matter to bear on the subject under discussion, viz., God's providential dealings with men; (2) To speak in a calmer and more dispassionate tone than the three friends, as not having had anything irritating addressed to him by Job. The argument of the friends, that Job's sufferings proved him to be a transgressor. Elihu's object to show that afflictions and trials are often of a disciplinary character.—Necessary in a discussion—(1) To be able to say something new; (2) To keep one's temper.

6. *His deep interest in the subject, his consciousness of having much to say upon it, and his earnest desire to deliver it.* Verse 18.—"For I am full of matter: the spirit within me (Heb. 'of my belly' or heart) constraineth (or straiteneth) me. Behold, my belly (or heart, as John vii. 38) is as wine which hath no vent (or outlet for the escape of the gas generated in the course of fermentation); it is ready to burst like new bottles (or, like skin-bottles containing new wine undergoing fermentation; old skins being more liable to burst than new ones, Matt. ix. 17, 18). I will speak that I may be refreshed (relieved of the inward pressure to deliver what I have to say on the subject); I will open my lips and answer." In the East, a young man only justified in speaking in the presence of seniors, when he has much to say on the subject under discussion. Observe—The duty of Christians in general, and of preachers in particular: (1) To be deeply interested in subjects pertaining to the Divine glory and the welfare of men. Well to be "zealously affected always in a good thing" (Gal. iv. 18). (2) To sympathize with the sufferings of a fellow-creature, and to seek in every way we can to alleviate them. (3) To obtain correct views as to the cause of afflictions, and the best way to improve them. (4) To communicate for the comfort and benefit of others what we ourselves have been taught in regard to Divine things. That preacher likely to profit who feels that he has something important to say, and is inwardly constrained to say it. Desirable for a preacher to have the prophet's experience,—God's Word as a burning fire shut up in his bones (Jer. xx. 9). "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 20). Paul pressed in the spirit at Corinth, and so testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (Acts xviii. 5). Preachers needed who are ready to burst with the good news they have to communicate to their hearers concerning the great salvation of God. Such the preachers of the Gospel who at first turned the world up-side-down, and would do so again if found in any considerable number.

V. Elihu's resolution to be plain and impartial in his discourse, and his reason for it. Verses 21, 22.—"Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person (shew partiality to any on the ground either of age or reputation), neither let me give flattering titles unto man (employing titles of honour and compliment, or speaking blandly and flatteringly, instead of plainly and honestly, and calling things by their right names). For I know not (am neither able nor willing) to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away" (by some signal manifestation of His displeasure; or simply, "my Maker will soon take me away," *i. e.*, by death: I shall soon appear in His presence and render an account of what and how I have spoken). The Orientals remarkable for their employment of flattering titles in addressing others. Observe—(1) *Plainness of speech in a preacher not incompatible with courtesy.* Paul an example of both. (2) *The preacher neither to be influenced by fear nor favour in delivering his message or performing his office.* His business not to please but persuade men, or to please only in so far as it may tend to their edification, and with that object (Rom. xv. 2; 1 Cor. x. 33; ix. 22). His duty to declare the whole counsel of God; to speak necessary truth, however unpalatable; to deliver his message

faithfully, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. (3) *Important recollection for a preacher*: "*My Maker will soon take me away.*" Good to speak "as a dying man to dying men." (4) *The remembrance of Christ's presence as a hearer the best safeguard to the faithfulness of the preacher, and the best means of deliverance from the fear of man.* Fear or flattery of man on the part of a preacher, an insult to his Master. Foolish as well as base to court the page's favour instead of the sovereign's. "That man preaches before me as if he had the Almighty standing at his elbow!"—*James the First, of one of his Court Preachers.* Latimer's introduction to his sermon before Henry the Eighth: "Remember, Hugh Latimer, that thou speakest before the king, and, therefore, take good heed to what thou sayest in presence of his majesty; but remember also, Hugh Latimer, that thou speakest before the King of Kings, whose servant thou art, and who shall one day call thee to account."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ELIHU'S FIRST SPEECH.

Elihu addresses himself to Job on the subject of God's afflictive dispensations. Afflictions often disciplinary chastisements.

I. He bespeaks Job's careful attention to all that he has to advance.

Verse 1.—"Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches and hearken to all my words." Elihu speaks as one that had much to say. His speech, or perhaps rather *speeches*, much the longest of any in the controversy. Probably two speeches, separated by a pause or interval of silence (ch. xxxv. 1; xxxvi. 1). His statement—"I am full of matter," confirmed by the fact. His speeches, in this respect, perhaps in accordance with his age. Youthful speakers often wordy. The work of time and experience to learn to prune down our discourses and avoid multiplying words.—Elihu makes good his promise not to give flattering titles. Addresses Job by his plain name. A king of Spain complained that he lacked one who would speak plainly and faithfully to him without flattery and partiality.—Elihu speaks with courtesy and respect as well as earnestness,—"I pray thee." "Be courteous,"—a New Testament precept; to be especially remembered by all who endeavour to persuade others. Paul an example of courtesy to his hearers. Often, like Elihu, employs the language of entreaty (Rom. xii. 1; Eph. iii. 4). A duty to give serious attention to *all* that an earnest and enlightened preacher has to say; still more that the inspired Word itself teaches (Deut. v. 27; Acts x. 35). Men not to listen to only as much as pleases them, or accords with their own views.

Elihu bespeaks attention on the ground—

1. *Of his own earnestness, and purpose to enter fully and intelligently into the subject.* Verse 2—"Behold, now I have opened my mouth; my tongue hath spoken (or speaketh) in my mouth," (*margin*, in or with "my palate;" the palate, or roof of the mouth, used in articulate speech; perhaps referring to the distinctness with which it was his purpose to speak on the subject in hand). The expression: "I have opened my mouth," an Oriental one, indicating—(1) The setting of oneself to deliver a weighty and important discourse. Said of Jesus (Matt. v. 2). (2) Fulness of matter and readiness of utterance, as if the words were waiting for egress, and flowed forth spontaneously. Paul's request for the Church's prayers, that "utterance" (freeness of speech) might be given him, that he might "open his mouth boldly, as he ought to speak" (Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3).

2. *Of his sincerity in what he says, as well as the clearness with which he will speak.* Verse 3.—"My words shall be of (or from) the uprightness (or sincerity) of my heart; and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly," (or "they," *i.e.*, his words, "shall utter the sentiments of my lips purely"—sincerely, clearly, and correctly). Elihu, anxious to appear to Job and the rest—(1) *As unprejudiced and sincere*—points in which the three friends had appeared to him to fail. Their views one-sided, and their minds prejudiced against Job on account of his extraordinary afflictions. Not always easy, though in the highest degree important, for a speaker to divest himself of prejudice, partiality and passion, and to be pure and sincere in his motives. Truth to be spoken without gall or guile. "Speaking the truth (literally, 'truthing it') in love." Truth often distorted through passion and prejudice. (2) *As expressing his views simply and distinctly.* Using plain language, and uttering exactly what he thinks, without fear or favour, mistiness or circumlocution. Plainness, simplicity and directness, important in every teacher of Divine truth. "All our learning necessary to make things plain."—*Archbishop Ussher.* Paul again an example to preachers,—"We use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. iii. 12). The vision to be

made "plain, that he may run [at once for escape] that readeth it," (Hab. ii. 2). (3) *As uttering what is true and correct on the subject.* "Shall utter knowledge"—not fancies but facts, not mere opinions but truth. What Elihu promised he appears to have performed. No fault found at last by the Almighty with any of his utterances, as in the case of the three friends. A religious teacher to employ the greatest possible care, both by prayer and study, to have his discourses and instructions strictly in accordance with revealed truth and the circumstances of the case. "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter, iv. 11). Care to be taken that the Word of God be not corrupted or adulterated (2 Cor. ii. 17). Preachers to utter not merely what they have heard or read, but what they "know" (John iii. 11; Acts iv. 20).

3. *Of his equality with Job as a creature of God.* Verses 4—7.—"The Spirit of God (either the Divine *power*, corresponding with 'breath' in the next clause; or the Divine person so spoken of throughout the Scriptures) hath made me [in connection with thyself], and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life (as to Adam and all his children, Gen. ii. 7). If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order (produce and exhibit thy arguments) before me; stand up [as an opponent against what I have to say]. Behold, I am according to thy wish (or, 'mouth,'—referring to Job's words chap. ix. 34, 35; xiii. 21, &c.; or simply, 'like thee') in God's stead (or, 'for God,' *i.e.*, to plead in his name; or, 'in relation to God,' *i.e.*, as his creature); I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror (or overpowering majesty) shall not make thee afraid; neither shall my hand (or power as of a superior being) be heavy upon thee." Elihu, conscious of having no advantage over Job from his position, wishes him to listen at ease, and to answer with freedom. Those engaged in a discussion, to be able to speak on equal grounds and without fear from the authority and power of each other. "He must be confessed the better scholar who has thirty legions at his command,"—*Phavorinus* the philosopher, in reference to Adrian the Emperor. Observe:—(1) A sign of weakness in dealing with an opponent, to take undue advantage either of learning or position. (2) The wisdom and kindness of God, first in revealing Himself by one who became a partaker of our own nature, and then of employing not angels but men in the ministry of reconciliation. Elihu possibly designed by the Holy Ghost to be a representative and type both of Christ and His Apostles, as well as of all faithful preachers of the Gospel. (3) The record of man's creation as found in the Bible, well known in the days of the writer of the Book. (4) The Holy Ghost probably known as a distinct person. Personality apparently here ascribed to Him. So in Gen. i. 2. Probably also in Gen. vi. 3. The breath or wind a Scriptural symbol of the Spirit, as proceeding from God, and mighty in His operation (Ez. xxxvii. 9—14; John iii. 8; Acts ii. 2—4). A plurality of persons recognized in the one Divine Creator (Gen. i. 26; so Job xxxv. 10—"my Maker," Hebrew, "my makers;" so Isaiah liv. 5). (5) The specialty in man's creation here referred to, such as to render him an intelligent being, capable of reasoning and uttering important truth.

II. States his complaint against Job (verses 8—11). His complaint not against Job's former life, but his present language. Verse 8.—"Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words." Elihu, till now, only an attentive listener. The best listener likely to be not the worst speaker. "Swift to hear, slow to speak." Reference made by Elihu to such passages as chap. ix. 17, 30; x. 7, &c. The grounds of his complaint in reference to Job's language—

1. *His maintaining his sinlessness.* Verse 9.—"Saying, surely I am clean, without transgression; I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me." Given as the substance of Job's statements, rather than his exact language. Perhaps a mistaken or exaggerated representation of it. Yet according to the impression made by Job's speeches on the mind of a bystander. His expressions often rash, unguarded, and extreme. At times seemed to say all that is here imputed to him, although not intending it in the sense in which Elihu understood it. His intention probably only to maintain that he was not conscious of living in the known breach of any of God's laws, as he was suspected of doing, and that he was free from any such crime as to deserve, above others, the awful calamities with which he had been visited. Observe—(1) Easy, under strong feeling, to utter unguarded language, capable of being misunderstood. (2) Our duty to put the most charitable construction on the words of a good man, uttered at a time of suffering and excitement. (3) Job's error, that he maintained too vehemently his own innocence, and was more careful to vindicate himself than justify God. Personal depravity and imperfection the lesson he had yet to learn.

2. *His charging God.* Verses 10, 11. Job seemed to charge God—(1) With *fickleness and unkindness.* Verse 10.—"Behold, he findeth occasions (quarrels or

breaches of friendship, Num. xix. 34) against me; he counteth me for his enemy." Reference to Job's language in such places as chap. ix. 17; xiii. 24; xvi. 9; xix 11; xxxi. 21. God's former friendship and regard viewed by Job as now changed without cause into enmity. A grievous mistake, and reflection on the Divine character. God's love unchangeable (Jer. xiii. 3; John xiii 1). His *face* may change, but not His *heart* (Is. liv, 7—10). God may *seem* to count a man His enemy, whom He *really* regards as His friend. Love and hatred on the part of God not to be always gathered from His external dealings. Often the greatest love where there appears the greatest want of it. "You only have I known; therefore," &c. On the other hand, often the greatest anger where there appears none. Observe—The pride of the natural heart leading to vehement vindication of ourselves, may easily, in the darkness and confusion of our spirit under trouble, lead also to language reflecting on our Maker and His procedure. (2) With *treating Him unjustly as a criminal.* Verse 11.—"He putteth my feet in the stocks" (or clog,—either as a punishment or a means of preventing escape). Job's actual language (chap. xiii. 27). The child sometimes placed under temporary confinement while the servant or slave goes at large. (3) With *acting towards Him with undue severity and strictness.* Verse 11.—"He marketh all my paths" (as if watching for the least offence, in order to punish it). So Job seemed to say (chap. xiii. 17; xiv. 16; xxxi. 4). The flesh in a tried believer, constantly liable to mistakes in regard to God and His dealings. God, for Christ's sake, *forgets*, instead of *marking*, the offences of those who take hold of His covenant (Jer. xxxi. 34; Heb. viii. 12; x. 17). Casts them behind His back, and into the depths of the sea (Is. xxxviii. 17; Mic. vii. 19). Forgets the evil deeds of His faithful though imperfect servants, but remembers their good ones (Matt. xxv. 35—40; Heb. vi. 10). Treasures up their tears, but blots out their transgressions (Ps. lvi. 8; Is. xliii. 25).

III. Condemns Job for such sentiments. Verse 12.—"Behold, in this thou art not just." Job neither—(1) Correct in judging according to the facts of the case; nor (2) Just in his views regarding God. A man may be ordinarily just towards his fellowmen when he is very unjust towards God. Improper sentiments in regard to God and His dealings are injustice towards our Maker. This injustice charged upon Job rather than any iniquity in his past life.—Elihu gives his reasons for condemning Job for his language. "I will answer thee." Our speech to be with grace, seasoned with salt [or wisdom], that we may know how we ought to answer every man (Col. iv. 6.) "Every one shall kiss *his* lips who giveth a right answer." Elihu's main reasons for man's silent submission and acquiescence in all the Divine procedure—

1. *God's greatness in comparison with man.* Verse 12.—"God is greater than man." God greater than man in wisdom, power, and justice. Greater than man as his Maker, Ruler, and Judge. The natural inference from this—man, even the greatest and best, is not to strive with God. "Why dost thou strive against Him?"—quarrelling with and disputing against His procedure (Is. xlv. 9). God's greatness above man sufficient to exclude all murmurs and complaints, as—(1) *God is not to be required to give an account of his procedure to any of his creatures.* Verse 13.—"For (or because) he giveth not account of any of his matters" (or dealings). The reason why Job should have refrained from the sentiments he had uttered in regard to God, and why neither he nor any one ought to "strive against Him." God a sovereign who acts according to His own will, though never but in infinite wisdom, rectitude, and holiness. Monstrous presumption to think that the Creator is to be called to His creature's bar to answer for what He does (Ps. cxv. 3; Dan. iv. 35). God too great to stoop to defend His procedure against the cavils of rebellious worms. This the scope of Jehovah's own answer to Job afterwards. (2) *God is not to be comprehended by His short-sighted creatures.* Folly and presumption for man to think he is able to comprehend God's dealings, except as He is pleased to reveal and explain them. Hence the weakness and wickedness of censuring them.

"As if upon a full-proportioned dome,
On swelling columns heaved, the pride of art!
A critic fly, whose feeble ray scarce spreads
An inch around, with blind presumption bold
Should dare to tax the structure of the whole."

2. *God employs sufficient means for man's instruction, which are yet unheeded.* Verse 14.—"For God speaketh (in order to man's instruction and direction) once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth (or regardeth) it not." Man does not perish from want of means on God's part for his preservation, but from inattention to them on his own. Not left without sufficient light for his guidance, were the light improved. God unwearied in His instructions to men. Means employed apart from a written revelation of His will. Some of these specified. Verse 15.—"In a dream (as in the earlier periods of the world), in a

vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed (a state between sleeping and waking); then He openeth the ears of men (communicates His will), and sealeth their instruction (impressing it upon their hearts as with a seal, or secretly conveying their instruction as in a sealed document), that he may withdraw man from his purpose (or intended work, as Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6; Laban, Gen. xxxi. 24; Balaam, Num. xxii. 12, 20, 31), and hide pride from man (by keeping him back from it)." "He [by these means when meekly and attentively received] keepeth back his soul from the pit (grave or corruption,—emblem of future punishment), and his life from perishing by the sword [of Divine judgment]." Thus God employs sufficient means of instruction to supply man's necessity though not to gratify his curiosity. Means still more abundantly employed in connection with inspired prophecy and a written revelation (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; Is. xxviii. 13; Heb. i. 1). These means often unheeded by man—(1) Through indifference and sloth; (2) Through worldliness and love of sin. A sufficient reason why Job and other sufferers should refrain from murmurs and complaints. Man is in a state of disobedience. God, in the exercise of mercy and compassion, employs means for his recovery, but often, through man's waywardness, without effect. No just cause for striving against Him. God only kind to man, till compelled to be severe. At first uses gentle means for his restoration. Only from necessity employs more painful ones, and still from kindness to man. Acts towards men not merely as a governor but as a father. His eye constantly upon them for their good. His object in his admonitions to men—

First: To "withdraw man from his purpose" or work. Sin properly man's work. "The thoughts of the imaginations of man's heart only evil from his youth" (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions (Eccles. vii. 29.) Man's purposes and doings often such as if carried out would be ruinous both to themselves and others. Men kept back by God from many sins which they would otherwise commit.

Second: To "hide pride from man." Pride fallen man's besetting sin. Exemplified in the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen. xi. 4); in Pharaoh,—"Who is the Lord?" &c.; in Sennacherib,—"By the strength of my hand I have done it" (Is. x. 13); in Nebuchadnezzar,—"Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" in Herod, eaten up of worms, "because he gave not God the glory" (Acts xii. 23); even in good Hezekiah,—"his heart was lifted up" (2 Chr. xxxii. 25). Pride at once the subtlest and most hateful of sins. Robs God of His glory and man of his peace. Founded on a lie, that we are something when we are nothing. Loathsome in a creature hitherto unfallen, monstrous in one already fallen. Insinuates itself into man's best actions and holiest feelings. Often the "fly in the pot of ointment." Can array itself in the garb of humility. "Lowliness" often made "young ambition's ladder." Possible to be proud of one's humility. Such a thing as spiritual pride. The sin of the Pharisee. The most loathsome of all the forms of pride. Doubtful if there can be such a thing as a "just pride." To be elated with pride the next step to falling into the "condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. iii. 6). "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." God's aim to keep Israel back from pride (Deut. viii. 11—18). The sin that banished the angels from heaven and our parents from paradise.

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.
By that sin fell the angels: how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?"

God hides pride from men—(1) By showing the hatefulness of it; (2) By discovering the consequences of it; (3) By removing the occasions of and temptations to it. Afflictions and trials often sent to keep men humble, and mercies withheld or removed which might prove the occasion of pride. True humility a fruit of the Spirit and a feature of the new man in Christ. To be learned at the feet of Jesus and in the shadow of His cross. Christ the only example of perfect humility (Matt. xi. 29; Phil. ii. 5—8.)

Third: To save men from the consequences of transgression,—to "keep back their soul from the pit." Sin's consequences, the pit of the grave, and that of which it is the emblem, the "bottomless pit" (Rev. ix. 1). Death, in its full extent, the wages of sin (Rom. vi. 23; Gen. ii. 17; James i. 15). Some sins lead directly to temporal death; all sin to death eternal. Man composed of body and soul. The penalty of sin extends to both. The soul that sinneth it shall die. A first and second death (Rev. ii. 11). The former the shadow, the latter the substance. The first death, man's separation from the light of this world; the second, his separation for ever from the light and glory and blessedness of the next. The first, to a believer in Christ, bereft of its sting and converted into a blessing; the second, only remediless unmitigated woe. The latter a necessity as well as righteous sentence. Sin its own misery and

punishment. No peace possible to the wicked. Without holiness no man see the Lord. God's great object to save men from eternal death, and from sin which is its cause. Hence the giving up of His own Son as man's substitute. "Die man or justice must, unless," &c. Christ made "sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities" (Is. liii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 21).

Perhaps another reason for man's acquiescence in God's procedure intimated in verse 14. "God speaketh (decreeth or purposeth) once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not" (or, "but twice, or a second time, He—God Himself—does not consider it, so as to alter or improve it.) God's purposes founded on infinite wisdom and holiness, and therefore unchangeable.

IV. Passes to personal affliction as a means employed for man's benefit. Verse 19—22.—"He (man in general, or the man whose spiritual benefit God is aiming at) is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain (or, 'and with incessant racking of his bones' Ps. xxxviii. 3; Is. xxxviii. 13); so that his life (or appetite) abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat (*Heb.*, 'meat of desire,' or meat otherwise desirable). His flesh is consumed (or pines) away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out (or, 'his bones are wasted away [so that] they are not seen'), yea, his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers" (the bands or pains of death as Acts ii. 24; "things causing death," as the *Latin Vulgate*; or simply, death itself, Hades or the invisible world, as the *Septuagint* or Greek version; or perhaps the angel of death—"him that hath the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14). Observe—

1. *Affliction the result of sin.* Affliction in general the consequence of the first transgression. Individual cases of affliction often the chastening for some particular offence. Thus the leprosy of Miriam, Gehazi, and King Azariah; the plague in Israel's camp in the Wilderness; the emerods of the Ashdodites; the disease of Herod. Diseases threatened to Israel as the consequence of disobedience (Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 60) Sickness and disease also the disciplinary consequence of sin in the New Testament. Distinctly stated in 1 Cor. xi. 30; implied in James v. 15.

2. *Affliction of the body one of God's remedial measures for the welfare of the soul.* Diseases His servants. His to bring down to the grave. Diseases His rebuke for iniquity. In His hand as the Creator and Ruler of the universe. Employed by Him as a father, under a dispensation of mercy, for the benefit of His children. A testimony that God is gracious and has purposes of mercy in reference to man. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "He that spareth the rod hateth the child" (Prov. xiii. 24). Affliction no less employed by God as a fatherly chastisement because coming through secondary or natural causes. The causes themselves in His hand as well as the effects they are to produce. A part of His providential plan and government of the world He has made and cares for. His to bring the causes of disease to bear on the individual and in such a way as to produce the end. The Shunamite's child goes out to the reapers, and returns home with a sunstroke and dies. Of God's ordering that the child was there, and that the sunstroke should happen and produce the effect which it did, while other children escaped. Diseases induced in a thousand ways, when apparently, but for the most trifling circumstance, they might have been avoided. The effect of a cause in producing disease dependent upon various circumstances, the same cause often operating differently in different cases. The circumstance determining the effect, in God's hands. This no reason why care is not to be exercised in order to avoid disease and prolong health in ourselves and others. Such care enjoined as a duty. "Do thyself no harm." "Thou shalt not kill."

3. *Afflictions thus often made blessings.* But for a dispensation of mercy through the provision of a Saviour, disease only a penalty and part of the curse entailed by transgression. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In the economy of grace, the very curse converted into a means of blessing. Blessing connected in the Bible with chastening (Ps. xciv. 10; Job v. 17). Corrections of instruction the way of life (Prov. vi. 23). Designed in mercy, not to ruin but to restore. "Mercy, when an affliction is a correction, not an execution.—*Brooks.* Affliction, as a correction, designed—(1) To *arrest the sinner in his sinful career;* (2) To *subdue pride;* (3) To *lead to thought;* The prodigal "came to himself," and said, &c.; (4) To *exhibit the emptiness and unsatisfying nature of a present world;* (5) To *bring to view death, judgment and eternity;* (6) To *bring sin to remembrance as the cause of suffering,*—"*Father, I have sinned,*" *&c.;* (7) To *give us to realize God as our Governor and Judge, on whom we are dependant and to whom we are amenable as His creatures;* (8) Thus to *bring to repentance.*

Chastening the theology of Christians.—

Luther. The workshop of the virtues.—*Ambrose.* The treasury of all blessings.—*Brentius.* King Alfred prayed that God would frequently send him sickness. Man often like the top that moves only when it is whipped.—*Brooks.* David's experience, that of most: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have learned to keep thy law." Affliction a bitter but salutary drug in the hands of a heavenly father. The digging about the tree to render it fruitful instead of cutting it down. Manasseh's iron chain better to him than his golden crown.

V. Describes the means and result of sanctified affliction. Verse 23—28.—"If there be a messenger with him (either divine, angelical, or human; here probably the last, as Haggai i. 13; Mal. ii. 7; Eccles. v. 6; Rev. i. 20; same word usually rendered angel, and applied both to Christ and His ministers; here, one sent or employed by God for the patient's spiritual benefit); an imterpreter (one able to explain the meaning of the affliction and the way of improving it, probably a human spiritual teacher or enlightened friend, without excluding either the Great Teacher,—the Messenger of the covenant, who alone teaches to profit, or the Holy Spirit employed by Him and the Father, whose office it is to 'reprove [or convince] the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment'), one among a thousand (of rare intelligence, fidelity, and skill, Ecc. vii. 28); to shew unto man (here the afflicted person) his uprightness (either—(1) what he *should* have done, but which he has failed to do; or (2) his duty in his present circumstances; or rather (3) what may now restore him to a state of uprightness and acceptance with God, viz., repentance and faith in Him in whom, as our propitiation and substitute, we have righteousness and strength, Is. xlv. 24. Then (when these means have been employed and have operated successfully on the sick man's mind and heart in bringing him to humiliation, repentance, and faith) He is gracious (or favourable) unto him (has mercy upon him so as to pardon his sin and probably deliver him from his affliction, James v. 15, 16), and saith (decrees or commands—perhaps to an angel who may have the power given him to remove the disease, as John v. 4, or to Satan, who had the power of death committed to him, Heb. ii. 14): Deliver from going down to the pit (in the first instance, the *grave*, but probably including the idea of the bottomless pit (Rev. ix. 1), of which it was the symbol); I have found (provided or accepted) a ransom (what makes satisfaction for his sin, so that I can righteously forgive and restore him,—the great atonement, now laid hold of by the sick man in repentance and faith). His flesh (as *one* of the results of his repentance and faith) shall be fresher, or more tender, than a child's (as in the case of Naaman when healed of his leprosy, 2 Kings v. 14). He shall return to the days of his youth (as Ps. ciii. 5). He shall (as a *second* result of his repentance and faith, and the fruit of his sanctified affliction) pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him (—shall have both access to and acceptance with God); he shall see His face with joy (rejoice in the Divine favour and fellowship—a *third* and still more blessed result): for (in confirmation of these statements as to the results of sanctified affliction) He will render unto man His righteousness (will deal faithfully with him according to his conduct; in this case according to his repentance and faith; or, will restore to the sick man, on his repentance and faith, the righteousness which he lost by the Fall, but which is recovered in Jesus Christ the Second Adam, and given to the penitent believer). He looketh upon men (as the Omniscient Father and Ruler, as Ps. xiv. 2), and if any say (or as *margin*: "He [the sick man, as a *further* result and evidence of sanctified affliction] shall look upon men and say" [in confession and thanksgiving]; or, perhaps rather: "he shall sing [in praise of God, who has been so gracious to him] among or before men, and say"): I have sinned and perverted that which was right (transgressed God's righteous laws), and it profited me not (or, 'and He has not requited me according to my deserts'); He will deliver his soul (or as *margin*, 'He hath delivered my soul') from going into the pit, and his life (*margin*, 'my life') shall see the light" [both of this world and the next]. The passage indicates, in regard to

Sanctified Affliction,

First, the MEANS through which it is effected, viz.: *spiritual teaching.* Verse 23.—"If there be a messenger with him," &c. Spiritual teaching *always* necessary to the improvement of affliction. Ordinarily through a *human* teacher; always through a *Divine* one (Ps. xciv. 10). Something necessary to be *shown* to the patient. "To show unto man," &c. Observe—

1. *Affliction in itself not a blessing.* The blessing dependant on other things connected with it. Depends on the manner in which it works and in which the patient is inwardly exercised by it. "Worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them that are *exercised* thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). Spiritual teaching necessary in order to this. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord; and *teachest* him out of Thy law" (Ps. xciv.

10). Affliction may either soften or harden; as fire softens wax and hardens clay.

2. The *exhibition of Divine truth to the patient necessary to the improvement of his affliction.* Not only *prayer* to be made *for* him and *with* him, but suitable *truth* to be presented *to* him. Implied in the term "interpreter." His office to "*show*" to the sick man. The spiritual teacher *at least* as necessary to the patient as the physician. *Truth* to be *exhibited* for his *mind*, as well as *medicine* for his *body*.

3. *The spiritual teaching usually through human instrumentality.* The *Divine* Teacher absolutely necessary; a human teacher usually the instrument. The New Testament rule (James v. 14). "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church,"—who are required to be "apt to teach," and of whom at least *some* labour "in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. iii. 2; v. 17). Therefore not only to *pray* with the sick man, but to *instruct* him.

4. *Great skill and fidelity required on the part of ministers and others in healing the sick.* "One among a thousand." Easier to preach to a thousand hearers than to minister wisely and faithfully to one sick-bed. Study and prayer necessary for the bed-room as well as the pulpit.

5. *The part of the visitor of the sick to "show" to the patient "his uprightness"*—the *personal righteousness* in which he has failed, the *imputed righteousness* which he may yet obtain, and which he is now to seek, receive, and rejoice in, and the *present duty* required of him, viz., humiliation, repentance, and faith in the provided sacrifice. Hence the visitor's need of knowledge both of the law and of the Gospel; of sin and the way of salvation from it. By the law is the knowledge of sin; by the Gospel the knowledge of salvation. The visitor to be able to point the patient to the Saviour as God's way of righteousness for the sinner—"the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4), "and made righteousness to all who are in him" (1 Cor. i. 30).

Second, the RESULTS of sanctified affliction, or of repentance and faith on the part of the patient. Verse 24.—"Then," &c. The results varied and precious. Chiefly spiritual, in the patient's mind and *soul;* partly and frequently also in his *body*.

1. *Experience of the Divine mercy and forgiveness.*—"Then he is gracious unto him." God, as a righteous and holy God, able only to exercise forgiving grace and mercy in certain circumstances and on certain conditions. "*Then* He is gracious to him,"—when these things have taken place. The gracious inclination and purpose already there; the outlet or manifestation of it prevented till the patient's repentance and faith. Mercy provides the means for its own outflow to sinners. Repentance and faith necessary to the experience of pardoning mercy; but even these of mercy's own providing (Acts iii. 19; v. 31).

2. *Deliverance.*—"Deliver from going down to the pit." This deliverance probably twofold—the one a picture of the other. (1) Deliverance from *temporal* or *physical death*, which seemed impending. (2) More especially, deliverance from eternal death,—the object of the chastening. The death, which is the consequence and wages of sin, now averted in the patient's repentance and faith. Hence the *ground* of this deliverance—"I have found a ransom." In regard to the

Ransom.

Observe—

1. *The meaning and application of the term.* In Hebrew, literally a *covering*. Hence something to cover transgression; a ground of pardon (Ps. xxxii. 1). An atonement, or what satisfies justice, and makes it righteous to forgive transgressors. The name given to the mercy-seat or lid of the ark in the Holy of Holies; called also in the New Testament the Propitiation, from the atonement made on it by the sprinkled blood of the sacrifices (Lev. xvi. 14). Hence also, anything done, suffered, or paid as an atonement or ground of deliverance. Thus the intercession of Moses for Israel (Exod. xxxii. 20); and the censer taken into the camp by the zeal of Phinehas (Numb. xxv. 13). The price paid for the redemption of a captive. Egypt given for Israel's ransom (Isa. xliii. 3). The ransom, in reference to men, whatever God may please in His wisdom and goodness to appoint. Appointed according to the nature of the case and the deliverance afforded. Repentance and amendment on the part of a nation, made a ground of forgiveness and deliverance from threatened punishment. Thus Nineveh saved from predicted destruction. The existence of one truly righteous man in Jerusalem, in the days of Jeremiah, a ground of forgiveness to the whole city (Jer. v. 1). So the existence of ten righteous men in Sodom. Ahab's humiliation the ground of the deliverance of himself and the kingdom from threatened punishment during his own life-time (1 Kings xxi. 29). Confession of sin, with the prayer of faith on the part of the sick, made in the New Testament the more immediate ground of forgiveness, and consequent restoration to health (James v. 15, 16). Christ's death the only ransom-price of a sinner's deliverance from eternal death (Matt. xx. 28).

2. The *actual ransom in the text.* As the ground of the sick man's deliverance from eternal death, the ransom that provided by God Himself for the purpose—the *death of His own Son as a substitute for sinners*—to be exhibited in our time (1 Tim. ii. 6). That death typified and held forth as the ransom for sinners and the ground of their forgiveness and deliverance from death eternal, in the sacrifices slain and offered up in the patriarchal and Levitical age (Lev. xvii. 11). That death a full satisfaction to Divine justice for the sins of the world (1 John ii. 2). Through it, God able to be just while justifying the ungodly who believe in it (Rom. iii. 25, 26). Without shedding of blood no remission (Heb. ix. 22). The significance of sacrifices as typifying this ground of forgiveness understood by Job (chap. i. 5; xlii. 8).

3. *This ransom "found" or provided by God Himself.* "God so loved the world that He *gave* his only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32). The ransom found in His own bosom (John i. 18). The deliverance of the sick man the result of this ransom appropriated by and applied to him on his repentance and faith. That repentance and faith the ground or occasion of his deliverance from *temporal* death; the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," the ground of his deliverance from death eternal (1 Peter i. 20). Impossible for any but God to provide such a ransom. Man unable to provide a ransom for his brother even from death temporal (Ps. xlix. 7—9). Christ slain as the Ransom, the power and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). The words in the text the language of *joy*,—"I have found," &c. God "delighteth in mercy." Hence rejoices in finding a righteous way for its exercise. The father rejoices over the return of his prodigal or long-lost child, and the means of securing it. Similar language employed in reference to David as the type of Messiah (Ps. lxxxix. 19, 20).

3. *Restoration to health*, among the results of sanctified affliction. Verse 25.—"His flesh shall be fresher," &c. This probably included in the command: "Deliver from going down to the pit." The power to deliver from temporal death and to restore from the brink of the grave, in the hand of the Almighty. The command needs only to be given or power put forth. The Divine command as effectual in restoring to life and health as at the creation in producing light: "Let there be light, and there was light." The centurion's faith in regard to Jesus as the Son of God: "Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." *Diseases God's servants, to come and go at His bidding.* The leper's faith: "Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean." All nature, visible and invisible, under the Divine control. The command or will of Jehovah obeyed through all the material universe. "He spake and it was done." *Recovery from sickness dependant not on the skill of the physician, but on the will of the Almighty.* Till God says: "Deliver from going down," &c., all remedies fruitless. When He speaks the word, the simplest becomes effectual. A plaster of figs laid on Hezekiah's boil at the prophet's prescription, the means, at God's will, of saving the king's life (Is. xxxviii. 21). The power of

Healing the Sick,

claimed by God in regard to *Israel* (Exod. xv. 26; xxiii. 25; Deut. vii. 15). Ascribed to Him in regard to men in general (Ps. ciii. 3; cvii. 20). Exercised by Christ as a proof of His Divinity and Divine mission as the Messiah (Luke vii. 20—22). The same power communicated by Him to the Apostles as credentials of their Divine commission and of the truth of their doctrine (Mark iii. 15). The power communicated also to the seventy (Luke x. 9); and promised to believers in general (Mark xvi. 18). Continued in the New Testament Church as one of the "spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 9, 28). Exercised through the elders of the Church in connection with the prayer of faith and anointing with oil (James v. 14—16). Healing still imparted in the Church in answer to believing prayer. The institution at Mannedorf, in Switzerland, an evidence. The healing in the text in connection with repentance and the forgiveness of sins. The affliction sent on account of sin and with a view to the individual's repentance and salvation, most likely to be removed when, and only when, the end has been secured. Repentance and faith, followed by forgiveness and peace with God, even on *natural* grounds among the most likely means of restoration to health. Sin being the cause of sickness, natural that the removal of the cause should be followed by the removal of the effect. Thus forgiveness of sin followed by restoration to health (James v., 15, 16; Matt. ix., 2—6; Ps. ciii. 3). Hezekiah restored to health when God cast all his sins behind his back (Is. xxviii., 17).

4. *Access to God and acceptance with Him in prayer, a* FOURTH result of sanctified affliction. Verse 26.—"He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him."

Prayer

the natural and necessary consequence of a graciously awakened conscience, of submission to God, of repentance, and of faith in

the Divine mercy. The testimony concerning penitent Saul in Damascus: "Behold he prayeth." The prayer of the awakened and penitent sick man at least as much for forgiveness of sin as for restoration to health. With sanctified affliction, prayer becomes his "vital breath." The penitent and believing unable to live without prayer. Prayer the happy privilege of the child of God. A precious mercy in itself, as well as the means of obtaining more. Accepted prayer the result of the Spirit of adoption, crying "Abba Father," and of the Spirit of grace and supplication making intercession within us (Rom. viii. 15, 26; Zech. xii. 10). A heart to pray not always present with the need of prayer. Prayer, though made, not always accepted (Prov. i. 28; Is. i. 15). In sanctified affliction, prayer not only made but accepted: "He will be favourable unto him." Prayer only accepted when offered in penitence and faith. Believing prayer the channel for the best of all favours. The key that opens the cabinet of God and unlocks the treasures of heaven. God's favour, the fountain of all blessing, experienced through believing prayer. The Divine invitation: Seek ye my face. His face, or favour, not sought in vain (Ps. xxviii. 8; xxiv. 6; Is. xlv. 19). A mercy to be able to pray; a still greater one to have our prayer answered. A praying heart both preceded and followed by Divine mercy.

5. *Reconciliation with and joy in God.* "He shall see his face with joy." So the penitent prodigal in respect to his father (Luke xiv. 22—24). Reconciliation with God the sinner's greatest blessing. The object aimed at by God in the gift and sacrifice of His Son (2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Acts x. 36; Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 20—22). Aimed at in his chastenings (Hos. ii. 6, 7, 11—20). Reconciliation with and joy in God the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 1, 11). The spiritual healing of the penitent patient (Matt. v. 8). A foretaste of heaven thus enjoyed as the result of sanctified affliction (Rev. xxii., 4; Ps. xvii., 15). The sight of God's reconciled face here is heaven before coming to it—*Chrysostom.* No joy like that of seeing the reconciled face of God in Jesus Christ.

6. *Confession of sin, and praise to God for pardoning and restoring mercy,* a SIXTH result of sanctified affliction. Verse 27.—"He looketh upon men, and if any say, &c.; he will deliver his soul," &c. Probably better according to the *Margin*: "He (*i.e.*, the sick man now restored) shall look upon men and say, &c.; he (God) hath delivered my soul," &c. (1) *Confession of sin:* "I have sinned." A result and evidence of sanctified affliction. The language of the penitent prodigal (Luke xv. 21). Confession of sin made in respect to (i.) Its iniquity and turpitude: "I have perverted that which was right." Observe—(*a*) God's will concerning us and his law given to us, only what is right. (*b*) *All sin a perverting of what is right.* Sin an opposition to God's holy will and righteous law. (ii.) Its hurtful consequences: "And it profited me not;" or, "he hath not rewarded me accordingly." No profit in sin. Its promises delusions. Its pleasures but for a season. No profit in gaining the world and losing the soul. Not only no profit in sin, but absolute loss. Its fruit shame, its end death (Rom. vi. 21). An ill exchange for the path of obedience (Hos. ii. 7). The righteous desert of sin eternal death (Rom. vi. 23). Sin an ill paymaster that sends all his servants away weeping. —*Trapp.* Observe—(i.) *Confession of sin an evidence of genuine repentance.* Such confession made not feignedly, as by Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24); nor forcedly, as by Pharaoh (Exod. x. 16), and by Achan (Josh. vii. 20); nor despairingly, as by Judas Iscariot (Matt. xxvii. 4); but sincerely, freely, and hopefully, as by David (Ps. li. 3, 4, 12—14. (ii.) *Confession of sin an accompaniment of pardoning mercy.* Preceding it (Ps. xxxii. 5; 1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13). Following it (Ezek. xvi. 63).—(2) *Praise for pardoning and restoring mercy. Margin*: "He shall look on men and say," &c., or, "He shall sing among men," &c. Examples: Hezekiah (Is. xxxviii. 19, 20); David (Ps. xxx. 1—12). Praise, God's due for mercies received (Ps. l. 23; cxvi. 12, 13). Mercies doubly sweet when accompanied with a grateful heart and thanksgiving to their gracious Author.

VI. Re-asserts these gracious dealings of Divine Providence. Verses 29, 30.—"Lo (the fact worthy of careful notice, both from its truth and preciousness), all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit (the grave, and that state in eternity of which it is the symbol), to be enlightened with the light of the living" (made glad with the joy of those who are truly and spiritually alive). The "things" referred to, God's chastening men for sin by bringing them to the verge of the grave, and then restoring and blessing them upon repentance. Observe—

1. The *frequency* of such dispensations,—"Oftentimes." Not *always*. All not visited alike with chastening and affliction. God sovereign in his dealings. But *often*. Multitudes thus graciously visited. God merciful and gracious. Intent on man's welfare. Chastenings a greater proof of his love than the want of them (ver. 19). An ill sign

for a man when God will not spend a rod upon him.—*Brooks.*

2. The *object* of them,—"To bring back his soul," &c. God's object in chastening men, their present and eternal welfare. "He [chastens] for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 6, 11). This is all the fruit to take away his sin (Is. xxvii. 9). Man by nature in a state of darkness and of death. God's object in affliction to deliver him out of it. Brings his body to the verge of the grave to save his soul from going to a deeper pit. Danger of temporal death made a means of deliverance from death spiritual and eternal. The true penitent, one who was dead, but is alive again (Luke xv. 32). Life only in the favour and image of God. Heaven rather than earth the place of the living (Matt. xx. 32).

VII. Invites Job to reply, and urges attention to his further remarks.

Verses 31—33.—"Mark well, O Job; hearken unto me: hold thy peace and I will speak. If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee (or 'thy justification' or 'righteousness'). If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom." Observe—

1. *Opportunity to be given to reply or object to our statements.* The benefit of inquiry or after-meetings in connection with special or missionary services.

2. In the absence of objection or reply, respectful attention the more to be expected.

3. Hearers to be convinced that we speak from a simple desire for their own benefit. The desire of the preacher of the Gospel, the justification of the hearers through their acceptance of Jesus as the Lord their Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6). Christ the way of a sinner's justification. The way provided by God, and the *only* way. "The end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4).

4. The hearer's character and case to be viewed in the most favourable light that truth admits of. The contrary the case with Job's three friends. Hence Job's irritation rather than conviction. Elihu takes up a contrary position, and Job is silent.

5. *True "wisdom," to understand the character and dealings of God, and to act in humble submission to Him under those dealings.* This wisdom taught by Elihu, and ultimately learned by the patriarch.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ELIHU'S SECOND SPEECH.

Probably after waiting for a reply from Job, and none being forthcoming, Elihu resumes. Verse 1.—"Furthermore Elihu answered (took up speech), and said." Job's silence probably indicative of the effect produced by Elihu's first speech. Elihu now addresses himself partly to the three friends and others present, and partly to Job himself. The first part of his speech addressed to the former. In the preceding chapter, Elihu vindicates God's goodness; in this, His justice.

1. His introduction. Verse 2—4.

1. *Bespeaks their careful attention, and appeals to their sound judgment.* Verse 2.—"Hear my words, O ye wise men (the three friends, and perhaps others), and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge." Observe—(1) Wisdom and knowledge required to judge correctly of statements made respecting things pertaining to God and His moral government. (2) The part of a wise man to give earnest attention to what is advanced on such subjects. (3) A wise speaker willing to be corrected by men of judgment and understanding.

2. *Invites an impartial examination of his statements.* Verse 3.—"For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." Observe—(1) *Man is furnished by his Creator with means for testing statements on moral and religious truth, as well for trying the food which he is to eat.* (2) *Private judgment in reference to such subjects man's duty as well as his right.* His duty carefully and impartially to examine, and so either to adopt or reject. The Bereans commended, because they not only "received the word with all readiness of mind," but "searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so" (Acts xvii. 11). The New Testament rule—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." "Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they be of God." "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" "Judge ye what I say." (1 Thess. v. 21; 1 John iv. 1; Luke xii. 57; 1 Cor. x. 15). The Old Testament rule: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge:" "To the

law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Prov. xix. 27; Isaiah viii. 20).

3. *Exhorts to a faithful treatment of the subject in hand.* Verse 4.—"Let us choose to us judgment (let us examine among ourselves, and choose as our conclusion what is the right view of the case): let us know among ourselves (learn, and so acknowledge and adopt) what is good" (right and true on the subject in hand). Like that of the Saviour: "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John vii. 24). And that of the Apostle: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect, even the will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). Observe—(1) The part of a wise man to contend, not for victory, but for truth; (2) What is right and true alone is good. A false view and a wrong course never, in the end, a profitable one.

II. Elihu's charge against Job. Verses 5—9.—"For Job hath said," &c. Job's language, rather than his life, the subject of Elihu's censure. The friends had, by inference, condemned Job's life *previous* to his affliction; Elihu condemns, as a matter of fact, his language *under* it. His general charge against Job, that he seemed to *accuse God of acting unjustly towards him.* More especially—

1. That he *justified himself as righteous.* Verse 5.—"For Job hath said: 'I am righteous,'—'without transgression,'" *i.e.*, such as to merit such treatment. Reference to such parts of Job's speeches as chap. ix. 17; xiii. 18; xvi. 17. Job maintained his innocence in opposition to what his friends suspected and believed, and to what his present calamities seemed to indicate. This, even in Elihu's judgment, improperly maintained by Job, as reflecting on his Maker's character and government. Job's language, though relatively true, yet too strong and unqualified, and apparently uttered in a self-righteous spirit. Declarations of personal righteousness like those of Job, unbecoming in a sinner. Lawful for a man boldly to declare his righteousness only as he is righteous in Christ. "Surely shall one say: In the Lord have I righteousness: in Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Is. xlv. 25).

2. That he *charged God with injustice and wrong in the way He treated him* (Verse 6)—"God hath taken away my judgment (deprived me of my righteousness in treating me as a guilty person; or, has put aside my righteous cause); my wound is incurable (or grievous) without transgression" [on my part to deserve it]. Job's actual language (ch. xxvii. 2). Observe—(1) *Complaint against God's dealings an implied challenge of His justice.* (2) *God's righteousness to be acknowledged in all the circumstances of our lot.* The proper language of a sufferer: "The Lord is righteous:" "He hath not dealt with us after our sins (2 Chron. xii. 6; Jer. xii. 1; Ps. ciii. 10).

3. That he *had used contemptuous language in regard to God.* Verse 7.—"What man is like Job (or, 'what man is there like Job,'—a man having so high a character for piety), who drinketh up scorning like water?" Reference to Job's daring and irreverent language, in which he challenged God to a controversy on his case, and appeared to make his own righteousness less questionable than God's in the matter. Such language used by Job *frequently*, and with apparent *eagerness* and *pleasure*, like a thirsty animal taking a large draught of water. Same metaphor employed by Eliphaz in reference to mankind, and with respect to sin in general (ch. xv. 16). Job's language unusual in *any*, but especially in a person of his character. Observe—(1) *Perseverance and pleasure in doing or saying what is wrong a serious aggravation of the sin;* (2) *A grief and offence to the godly when a pious man is found speaking or acting in a way unlike himself.* Thus Abraham in Egypt; David in the matter of Uriah; Peter in the high priest's palace. David's prayer always necessary: "Keep back thy servant," &c.; "Set a watch before my mouth," &c. (Ps. xix. 12—14; cxli. 3).

4. That he *appeared to adopt the language and sentiments of the ungodly.* Verse 8.—"Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men,"—namely, in using such language and adopting such sentiments. Observe—(1) *The part of the ungodly to entertain unjust thoughts of God, and to speak irreverently in regard both to Himself and His dealings.* (2) *A godly man to be careful not to countenance the ungodly in their views and language, either by what he says or does.* (3) *The views and language of the ungodly in reference to God and His dealings to be carefully avoided, as well as their company.* (4) *A man appears to be the companion of those whose language, views, and practices he adopts.* The proper language of a godly man: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee" (Ps. cxix. 63). His prayer: "Gather not my soul with sinners" (Ps. xxvi. 9).

5. That he seemed *to deny that there was any benefit in true religion* (ver. 9). "For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in

God." True piety also characterised, though by a different Hebrew word, in ch. xxvii. 10, as a *delighting in God.* The expression in the text indicates—(1) To have friendly and familiar intercourse with God; (2) To have pleasure in such intercourse; (3) To make it one's care to please God; (4) To be satisfied with Him as one's portion. The character of the godly to walk with God, and have delight in such walk (Gen. v. 22—24). Observe—*True religion a delighting oneself in God* (ch. xxvii. 10).

Delight in God

Is—(1) Characteristic of the godly, and that which distinguishes them from the world. (2) Enjoined as a duty (Ps. xxxvii. 5; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4). Gladness required in serving him (Deut. xii. 12, 18; xxviii. 47; Ps. c. 2; Is. lxiv. 5). (3) Promised as a reward of piety, especially in regard to the Sabbath (Job xxii. 26; Is. lviii. 14). Implies—

1. The *excellence and loveliness in God.* God worthy to be delighted in—(1) In Himself and His perfections; (2) In what He has become to us in and through Jesus Christ.

2. The *inwardness and spirituality of true religion.* True religion a thing of the *heart;* the seat of delight. Not a thing of *form or ceremony;* or of *bodily service*; or of *mere morality* or *outward obedience.* A thing of delight, because a thing of *love.*

3. The *happiness and pleasantness of true piety.* Not only *causes delight,* but *is itself a delighting.* Wisdom's ways pleasantness and peace. Delight and pleasure a necessary accompaniment of true religion. God the object of true religion, not as a Being merely to be feared or served, but *delighted in.* God sufficient in Himself to fill every intelligent creature with joy. His favour *life;* His loving kindness better than life. Believers though not *seeing* Christ, yet *believing* and so *loving* Him, rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter i. 8).

Delight in God shewn—

1. By *holding fellowship with Him.* We cultivate the society of those we delight in. Hence true religion a "walking with God," (Micah vi. 8; Gen. v. 22; vi. 9).

2. By *obeying His will and seeking to please Him.* Impossible willingly to disobey or grieve the person we delight in. To "walk with God," and to "please God," spoken of in Scripture as one and the same thing (Gen. v. 22, 54, compared with Heb. xi. 5).

3. By *ceasing to love and delight in the world.* Impossible to love and please two masters of opposite characters. The love of the world incompatible with the love of God (Matt. vi. 24; 1 John ii. 14, 15). The world a crucified thing where Christ is delighted in (Gal. vi. 14).

4. By *attending upon His ordinances.* His ordinances the means of fellowship with God, and helps to the enjoyment of Him. His banqueting house, where His banner over us is love (Cant. ii. 4). The sanctuary and the Sabbath a delight when God Himself is so (Ps. xxvi. 8; lxiii. 1, 2; lxxx. 1, 10; Is. lviii. 13).

5. By *cheerfully acquiescing in His appointments.* Delight in a person leads to delight, and at least to a cheerful acquiescence, in what he says and does. Strictly true in regard to God, all whose sayings and doings are known and believed to be right.

The profitableness of true religion, or "delighting oneself with God," apparently denied in some of Job's expressions, as ch. ix. 22, 23; xxi. 7—15. The reference, however, only to this life and the outward dispensations of Divine Providence. The language ascribed by Elihu to Job never really used by him. His employment of it Satan's great object. At times strongly tempted to it. Suggested by his wife. Asaph tempted in like circumstances to employ it (Ps. lxxiii. 12—14). The language of unbelief (Mal iii. 14). Godliness profitable to all things. Has the promise of both worlds (1 Tim. ii. 8; vi. 6).

III. Elihu's defence of God against Job's cavils and complaints.—(Verses 10—30). First addresses himself to the three friends and those present at the debate. Verse 10.—"Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding." Afterwards addresses his discourse to Job himself. Verse 16.—"If now thou hast understanding, hear this; hearken to the voice of my words." Elihu's self-imposed task, "to justify the ways of God to man." Intelligence in the hearers required to judge of statements made on such a subject. Elihu's arguments are—

1. *Iniquity and injustice incompatible with the Divine nature.* Verses 10—12. —"Far be it from God (as a thing profane to think of) that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity. For, the work of a man (or the *reward* of his work) shall He render unto him, and cause every one to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty prevent judgment" ("act unrighteously," or "pass an unrighteous sentence"). Injustice not merely denied of God, but denied as a thing not for a moment to be thought—as a thing utterly incongruous with His nature as God, and not possible to be found in Him. The idea of iniquity

incompatible with the idea of God. God's ways to be believed to be just and right, simply because they are His, and because they cannot be otherwise. The thought of injustice and wrong in God to be repelled with loathing and execration, as profane and abominable. Observe—(1) Some things to be not simply denied, but execrated; as injustice in God. Others to be not so much argued, as simply but strongly asserted; as that God is just (Rom. iii. 4, 5). (2) A man finds according to his ways either in this life or the next. Every work brought into judgment (Ecc. xi. 9; xii. 14; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 12). Sentence against an evil work only not speedily executed (Ecc. viii. 11). Sin sometimes punished in this life in the natural course of things which God has established. Sometimes punished by special and unexpected acts of His Providence, as in the case of Herod (Acts xii. 23). The impenitent sinner escaping punishment all through life is overtaken at last, and finds "according to his ways." The rich man dies and is buried, prosperous and luxurious to the last: but "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke xvi. 23).

2. *Injustice incompatible with God's absolute supremacy and independence as the Creator and Governor of the Universe.* Verse 13.—"Who hath given him a charge over the earth (or, committed the earth to his charge, as a superior commits a charge to a subordinate)? or who hath disposed the whole world?" (—placed the universe in the state in which we find it). Observe—(1) As Creator, Proprietor, and Supreme Ruler of the Universe, God can be under no temptation to injustice. To be unjust would be to wrong Himself. (2) God accountable to no superior. That the world exists at all, and is ruled by Him, is not from necessity imposed upon him, but from the benevolence of His own nature. God therefore to be called to account for his doings by none of His creatures.

3. *Man dependent on God's mere goodness for life and all he enjoys.* Verses 14, 15—"If He set His heart upon man (or, 'against man,' to deal strictly with him according to his deserts; or, 'if He directed His attention only to Himself'); if He gather (or 'He would gather') unto Himself [as its author, (Ecc. xii. 7)] his spirit and his breath [which He first breathed into man's nostrils to make him a living soul, Gen. ii. 7]; all flesh shall (or should) perish together (as at the general deluge, Gen. vi. 3, 17), and man shall (or should) turn again unto dust" [according to the original sentence pronounced on man after the Fall, Gen. iii. 19]. Observe—(1) *Man's life and breath entirely in the hands of God.* Given by God at first, and only continued at His pleasure In Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts xvii. 28). (2) A *sinner's continuance in life the fruit and evidence of Divine goodness.* His life forfeited to justice as a transgressor of the Divine law (Gen. ii. 17; Rom. vi. 23). (3) Injustice or wrong, therefore, on the part of God to His creatures, entirely out of the question. Hence (4) murmuring and complaining against God to be for ever silenced: "Wherefore doth a living man complain" (Lam. iii. 39).

4. *Injustice on the part of God incompatible with His being the Ruler of the Universe.* Verses 17, 19—"Shall even he that hateth right govern? (*Heb.*, 'bind,' as with authority and law; or 'bind up,' as a wound or fracture, a ruler being properly a 'healer,' Is. iii. 7). And wilt thou condemn him that is most just (or, 'him that is at once just and mighty?') Is it fit to say to a king (even an earthly sovereign), thou art wicked (*Heb.* 'Belial,' wickedness), and to princes, ye are ungodly? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of His hands." Observe—(1) The *mere fact of God being the Supreme Ruler of the Universe a sufficient proof of His justice.* Justice implied in the rule even of an earthly sovereign. An unjust ruler to be regarded as a monster—an exception to the ordinary course of things, and soon therefore coming to an end. The exercise of justice necessary to, and therefore supposed in, the continuance of government. "He that ruleth over men must be just" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). Abraham's plea: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xvii. 25). God just, because mighty. (2) *Rulers under the most solemn obligation to be just.* If the charge of iniquity is not to be made by the subject, it is not to be incurred by the sovereign. (3) *Rulers to be not only just, but beneficent.* A ruler to be a healer. The State more or less sick and wounded by sin and its consequences (Is. i. 5, 6; Jer. viii. 22). The part of a ruler to heal and bind it up—by just laws, wholesome authority, wise institutions, and godly example. The ruler a healer only as he rules "in the fear of God" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). Examples: Hezekiah; Josiah; Alfred. (4) *Reverence due to rulers and those in authority.* Rulers not to be reviled by their subjects (Exod. xxii. 28). God's vicegerents and representatives, and therefore called by his name (Ex. xxii. 2; Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6). (5) *God impartial in His government.* As His creatures, all on an equal footing in His sight. Differences among men disregarded by God. No difference of treatment either

from fear or favour. Hence (i.) warning to the sick; (ii.) comfort to the poor; (iii.) example to rulers and magistrates.

5. *Judgments inflicted on sinners, especially on powerful oppressors.* Verses 20—28. "In a moment (suddenly and speedily) shall they die (or, 'they—*i.e.*, the ungodly—especially the rich and powerful—die,' viz., under the infliction of Divine judgments), and the people (as distinguished from the princes) shall be troubled (or 'are troubled,' viz., by the judgments inflicted) at midnight (unexpectedly and in a time of quiet and security, as 1 Thess. v. 2), and pass away (as at the Deluge, and the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, or as by earthquakes, &c.): and the mighty shall be (or are) taken away without hand [of man, or any human agency or violence]. For His eyes are upon the ways of man (both rulers and ruled), and He seeth all his doings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves [from His eye, or elude His vengeance]. For He will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God (giving him occasion to complain of being punished beyond his deserts; or, 'He does not direct His attention long to a man for him to go to God in judgment,' as if needing long investigation into his case in dealing judicially with him). He shall break (or he breaks) in pieces (by His judgments) mighty men without number (or without enquiry), and set others in their stead (putting down one and setting up another, as Ps. lxxv. 7). Therefore (or, for) he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night (or 'in a night;' or 'he turneth night upon them,' *i.e.* the night of calamity and death, as in the case of Belshazzar, Dan. v. 30; and of Herod, Acts. xii 23; so that they are destroyed. He striketh them (by His judgments) as wicked men (—as other wicked men; or, 'because they are wicked men') in the open sight of others. Because they turned back from Him (or, from following after Him, viz., by adhering to His service and obeying His commands), and would not consider [seriously and attentively] any of His ways [whether in Providence or precept, so as to 'stand in awe and sin not']: so that they cause [by their oppression] the cry of the poor to come unto Him, and (or, so that) He heareth the cry of the afflicted." Observe—(1) *Judgments manifestly inflicted on tyrants and oppressors, a proof of the justice of the Divine government.* "The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth" (Ps ix. 16). History full of such judgments. (2) *The ungodly often overtaken and cut off by Divine judgments unexpectedly.* This still to be the case (1 Thess. v. 3). (3) *Impossible for the wicked, either by power or prudence, to escape God's righteous judgments.* God omniscient as well as omnipotent. His eye as penetrating as His arm is powerful. (4) *Ungodly men and oppressors often visited with signal and manifest judgments, as a warning to others and a testimony to the justice of the Divine government.* "So that a man shall say: Verily there is a reward to the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. lviii. 11). Open sinners often made open sufferers. (5) *Perseverance in His service, and consideration of His word and works, required by God of His intelligent creatures, whether rulers or ruled.* The want of it regarded by Him as a grievous sin. (6) *Disobedience and neglect in regard to God, as well as oppression and cruelty in regard to man, the frequent ground of suffering in this life, and, if unrepented of, the certain cause of misery in the next.*

6. *The dependence of all upon God for quietness and comfort.* Verse 29.—"When He giveth quietness (or forgives), who then can make trouble (or condemn)? and when He hideth His face (as in displeasure, or as withdrawing His help and favour; or 'When He hideth the face,' *i.e.*, condemns, or treats as a condemned criminal), who then can behold Him (enjoy His favour, or reverse the sentence of death)? Whether it be done against (or towards) a nation, or against a man only?" Observe—(1) *God the Sovereign Dispenser of quiet and comfort to individuals.* His to forgive or to condemn. His sentence irreversible. Hence the prophet's challenge in the person of the Messiah (Ps. l. 7—9), and the apostle's triumph in the name of believers (Rom. viii. 31—34). The part of God to give peace (Ps. lxxxv. 8; Is. xlv. 7; lvii. 19). Able to make even a man's enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. xvi. 7). Speaks peace and gives rest to an awakened sinner's conscience. To do this, the object of—(i.) The atoning death of Jesus. (ii.) His resurrection, as declarative of the Divine acceptance and efficacy of His death. (iii.) His ascension into heaven and session at God's right hand as the Advocate of believing sinners. (iv.) The mission of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter and Witness-bearer of the Saviour's work (Rom. viii. 34; xv. 16). Quiet and rest to the troubled conscience the object of the Saviour's mission (Is. lxi. 1—3; Luke ii. 10). His invitation and promise (Matt xi. 28). Peace and rest the fruit of faith in Him (Is. xxvi. 3; Rom. v. 1; xv. 13; Heb. iv. 3). (2) *God the Dispenser of rest and quietness to nations and Churches.* To nations (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 18). To Churches (Acts ix. 31). Nations and men equally in God's power (Is. xl. 15—17). His to make wars to cease to the ends of the earth (Ps. xlvi.

9); to make peace in our borders (Ps. cxlvii. 14); or in righteous judgment, to stir up one nation against another (Is. xiii. 17). (3) None able to frustate God's work and purpose, whether of mercy or of judgment (Is. xxvii. 3, 4; xliii. 14).

7. *The Divine benevolence in the judgments inflicted on oppressors.* Verse 30.—"That the hypocrite (or profligate) reign not, lest the people be ensnared" (or, "That there be no ensnarings or offences to the people"). Observe—(1) *Kings and rulers subject to God's ordination* (Rom. xiii. 1). His to say who shall and who shall not reign. His prerogative to put down one and set up another (Ps. lxxv. 6, 7). Examples: David set up instead of Saul (2 Sam. vi. 21); Jeroboam as ruler of the ten tribes instead of Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 4). (2) *A grievous evil to a people when a "profane, wicked prince" rules over them* (Ps. xii. 8). (3) *God's benevolence seen in His cutting short the reign of profane rulers* (Ez. xxi. 25). Men usually not suffered long to continue in the power which they abuse. The reason,—God is careful of the welfare of mankind. (4) *A people apt to imitate the example of their rulers.* An ungodly king a snare to his subjects. A dissolute prince makes a dissolute people. Example: The reign of the second Charles. (5) *God's benevolence, as seen in the judgments He inflicts on tyrants and oppressors, an evidence of the justice of His government.* A benevolent Being cannot be unjust.

IV. Man's duty under the Divine chastisements. Verses 31, 32.—"Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Elihu performs to Job the part of the messenger and interpreter he himself describes (chap. xxxiii. 23). Teaches what is man's

Duty under Chastisement.

1. To *turn to God.* Verse 31.—"It is meet to be said unto God." The afflicted to direct himself to God, who is dealing with him, and against whom he has sinned. God's object in chastisement to bring the individual to Himself. Thus the prodigal, in his distress, returned to his *father.* God's call under chastisement: "Return unto the Lord thy God" (Hos. xiv. 1). His complaint against Israel, that they returned, but not to *Him* (Hos. vii. 16, 10). God both speaks to us in chastening, and wishes to be *spoken to:* "It is meet to be *said* unto God:" "Take with you *words*, and turn to the Lord" (Hos. xiv. 2). No benefit from affliction till we speak to *God* in it.

2. To *acknowledge and accept the chastisement*: "I have borne chastisement." God's will that His chastening should be accepted and acknowledged. The condition on which He promised returning mercy to Israel (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42). The language of penitent Israel: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised" (Jer. xxxi. 18). The mark of a humbled heart, to accept or submit to chastisement (Lev. xxvi. 41). Divine chastening neither to be despised nor despaired under (Heb. xii. 5). The prophet our example under chastisement—"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mic. vii. 9). Divine chastisement to be borne—(1) submissively (2) Patiently; (3) Humbly; (4) Lovingly; (5) Thankfully. The chastisement of a believer not that by a master, but by a father. To be borne not as a slave, but as a child. The lesson Job now needed especially to be taught.

3. To *confess our sin.* "I have done iniquity." God's aim in chastisement to bring us to confession of sin. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (Jer. iii. 13). Forgiveness and mercy promised only upon confession (1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13).

4. To *resolve upon amendment.* "I will not offend any more. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." The language put into the mouth of penitent Israel: "What have I to do any more with idols? Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands: Ye are our gods" (Hos. xiv. 8, 3). Mercy promised to those who confess and *forsake* their sins (Prov. xxviii. 13). To abandon what we confess, the only proof of sincerity. The offence to be avoided may be either one of omission or of commission; may be either in spirit or demeanour, in heart or in life. God jealous over His people's inward affection as well as their outward conduct: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy *first love.* Remember, therefore, from whence thou art *fallen*, and *repent*, and do the *first works;* or else," &c. (Rev. ii. 4, 5).

5. To *pray for Divine teaching.* Verse 32.—"What I see not, teach thou me." A mark of humility and sanctified affliction when we seek and ask for Divine teaching. That teaching needed and desired—(1) In regard to *sin.* Sin the cause of suffering, and occasion for chastisement. To be seen and known in order to be confessed, forsaken, and forgiven. To be shown both as to its nature and its prevalence in ourselves. But little of sin seen by us in comparison with the sad reality. Much both of the malignity and demerit of sin at first unknown to us. Much sin unseen by us as existing in ourselves, both in heart and

in life. "Who can understand his errors?" "Cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Ps. xix. 12). David's prayer (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24). The mark of sincerity to desire to *know* our sin, instead of cloaking or palliating it. (2) In regard to *duty*. The penitent only partially acquainted with his duty. His desire to know the Lord's will in order to do it (Ps. lxxxvi. 11). The penitent's inquiry that of Saul on the way to Damascus, "Lord what wilt thou have me do?" (Acts x. 6).

V. Elihu's reproof of Job (verses 33, 35). —The reproof directed—

1. Against *his murmuring and discontent*. Verse 33.—"Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse or whether thou choose, and not I? (or, 'According to *thy* mind, shall he recompense it,' *i.e.*, thy conduct,—because *thou* refusest and *thou* choosest, and not I?'—the words supposed to be uttered by God himself): therefore speak what thou knowest" (*i.e.*, as to how God shall treat thee—spoken in irony). In Elihu's judgment Job's spirit and language under his afflictions open to severe censure—(1) On account of its *rebelliousness*. As if not God but Job himself were to rule in the matter of his treatment and appointment of his lot. The part of rebellion to wish to take the mode and measure of our chastisement out of God's hand into our own. This rebellion implied in all murmuring and discontent under trials. The language of piety and duty: "Not *my* will, but thine, be done:" "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Luke xxii. 42; John xviii.) (2) On account of its *pride*. The highest pride to think to arrogate to ourselves the distribution of rewards and punishments, or to prescribe how God shall deal with us. Murmuring and discontent imply the supposed possession of a wisdom superior to our Maker's.

2. Against his *ignorance*. Verses 34, 35. —"Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me (implying that Job had not spoken as such). Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom." Observe—(1) To cavil with our Maker's treatment of us, indicative of ignorance both in regard to God and ourselves. Job's want of knowledge and wisdom indicated in—(i.) Erroneously judging of God's dealings with him; (ii.) Sitting in judgment on those dealings at all; (iii.) Wishing to enter into controversy with God on the justice of them; (iv.) Charging God with undue severity in them. Thereproof given by Elihu seconded afterwards by the Almighty himself. Job's ignorance and want of understanding in what he had spoken afterwards acknowledged and repented of. (2) Humbling to subject ourselves to the reproof which we have administered to others. Job now reproved for what he had at first reproved his wife. (3) God's dealings with us not according to our ignorance, but His wisdom. (4) The disposal of our lot best left in God's own hands.

VI. Elihu's desire in regard to Job. Verses 36, 37.—"My desire is," &c

1. *The desire itself*. Verse 36.—"That Job may be tried unto the end" (fully, or more literally, "unto victory,"—until the end has been served in Job's humiliation and confession; the wish granted (ch. xli. 4, 5; xlii. 2—6.) Observe—(1) *Elihu's earnestness and zeal indicated in the wish with which he concludes his final speech*. A speaker should exhibit *warmth* as well as *wisdom*. People more likely to be persuaded when logic is accompanied with *feeling*. A preacher's light rather to resemble that of the sun than the moon. (2.) *Elihu's wish apparently exhibits more zeal for the truth than sympathy with the tried*. Wishes Job's trial still further to be continued. Apparently inconsistent with his former profession. The wish, however, both wise and benevolent, though apparently harsh. The best wish for the afflicted is that the affliction may produce the effects intended by it,—the spiritual benefit of the sufferer. Better the continuance of a trial than its premature removal. To have affliction removed before the heart is humbled, a curse rather than a blessing.

2. *The ground of the desire*. Verses 36, 37. —These are—(1) His apparently *ungodly sentiments*. "Because of his answers for (among, with, or like) wicked men." Some of Job's utterances apparently in favour of ungodliness, and only found in the lips of ungodly men. Sad when a godly man appears, even for a short time, to pass over to the side of the wicked, either in the sentiments he utters or the conduct he exhibits. An aggravation in the open sin of the godly that it associates them for the time with the workers of iniquity (Ps. cxli. 4). Care needed under temptation, lest we utter what may appear to favour ungodliness, and afford an excuse to the ungodly. Job's "answers" afterwards recalled and deeply repented of. (2) His *obstinacy and rebellion*. "He addeth (or will add) rebellion to his sin." A distinction between sin and rebellion. So between the sin of ignorance and the presumptuous sin. The latter much more heinous. "Sin" committed through the

infirmity of our nature; "rebellion," through the perversity of our choice. Believers sin; unbelievers add rebellion to their sin. Noah and Abraham, David and Peter, *sinned;* Pharaoh and Saul, Judas and Herod, *rebelled* in their sin. Sin greatly aggravated by rebellion and stubbornness in it. In Job's case, rebellion only at times approached. Was Satan's desire, and would probably have been his victory. Elihu's wish to prevent this result. Rebellion far from Job's heart and intention. The lips may sometimes utter what the heart abhors. (3) His *pride and contempt.* "He clappeth (or will clap) his hands among us." The token of triumph and contempt. Job victorious in the contest, but, in Elihu's judgment, had carried himself unbecomingly in his victory. Though victorious in the argument, not yet humbled in his spirit. Had not yet recanted his bold and irreverent language, and seemed still to glory in his innocence. Carried himself as victor not only over men, but God himself. Elihu's desire to correct this unseemly spirit. (4) The *impiety of his language.* "He multiplieth (or will multiply) his words against God." Job's language had at times appeared to assume this character. Irreverent and rebellious language a heinous sin. God's complaint against Israel in the days of Malachi: "Your words have been stout against me" (Mal. iii. 13). Words ordinarily the index of the heart (Matt. xii. 34). The characteristic of the ungodly to speak against God. The sin as early as the days of Enoch, before the flood (Jude 14). That for which Christ will execute judgment on the wicked at His second appearing (Jude 15). For every *idle* word that men speak they shall give account at the day of judgment; still more for every rebellious one (Matt. xii. 37). The confession of Isaiah that of every child of God (Is. vi. 5). The character of men universally. The believer's lips touched with the live coal from off the altar, and their iniquity taken away (Is. vi. 7). A "pure language" (or lip) one of the gifts of grace (Zeph. iii. 9).

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELIHU'S THIRD SPEECH.

After a second pause, and no reply, Elihu again resumes. Renews his reproof of Job, and attempts to answer some of his cavils. Verse 1.—"Elihu spake moreover," &c.

I. Reproves Job for his improper language. Verses 2, 3.—"Thinkest thou this to be right (or, 'Dost thou reckon this for judgment') that thou saidst," &c. Probably a sarcastic allusion to Job's vehement complaints about the want of "judgment." *Care necessary that we do not ourselves offend in that for which we are forward to blame others.* "Judge not that ye be not judged." Job's *language* rather than his life still the subject of Elihu's reproof." Job reproved—

1. *For maintaining his righteousness to be greater than God's.* Verse 2.—"My righteousness is more than God's,"—allusion to such passages as ch. ix. 30—35; x. 15. The supposed meaning rather than the exact words of Job's speeches. Job had maintained that his life had been pure and righteous, and that he was, notwithstanding, treated by the Almighty as wicked. The natural inference from the complaint—Job thinks himself more righteous than God. Job, judging from present appearances, often tempted to believe this. The same conclusion only avoided by the three friends by their falsely maintaining that Job must be a hypocrite and bad man. The error of both parties, that of judging of God's justice from His *present* dealings. Neither of them fully aware that God, for special reasons, may allow a godly man to be very severely tried. Their error that of the period in which they lived. A future judgment not yet fully revealed. The pious inclined to expect rewards and punishments in the present life. The peculiarity of Abraham's faith that he acted as one "that looked for a better country, that is, an heavenly;" content meanwhile to live as "a stranger and pilgrim on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13—16). Hence Abraham, not Job, the "father of the faithful." The nature of faith to give substance and reality to things hoped for, and the certainty of conviction as regards things not seen (Heb. xi. 1). Observe—(1) *In judging in regard to God and His dealings, apart from faith, men certain to fall into error.* Job's error and consequent irreverent language, the result of defective faith. (2) *Inferences from our language often such as we ourselves should be shocked at.* Probably Job himself would have recoiled from the language here ascribed to him. (3) *A good man responsible not only for his words, but from the inference that may justly be drawn from them.*

2. *In appearing to maintain that piety was*

profitless to its possessor. Verse 3.—"For thou saidst, what advantage will it be unto thee (viz., that thy life has been righteous and pure)? and what profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin (or as *margin*—'more than by my sin')?" Another inference from Job's actual language, closely connected with the former one. Job maintained that his life had been pure, and that, notwithstanding, he was a most grievous sufferer. Inference: Job maintains that piety brings no profit. True, if such sufferings continued through life, and there were no hereafter. Job's real assertion, however that in the *present* life, piety did no save its possessor from suffering. "If the scourge stay suddenly, He mocketh at the trial of the innocent" (ch. ix. 23). Satan's challenge that Job only served God for present advantage, and that when this was withdrawn, he would cast off his religion. His great object to accomplish this. The temptation from Job's wife. Against this, Job maintained that he was a righteous man, although he suffered so unusually, and that he would hold fast his religious character and conduct at all hazards (ch. xiii. 15). Observe—The sentiments ascribed to Job, the language of *unbelief.* Entertained by the unbelieving Jews in the days of Malachi (Mal. iii. 14). Even the godly tempted at times to employ such language (Ps. lxxiii. 13). *The opposite of the truth.* Godliness *profitable unto all things* (1 Tim. iv. 8). Yet the godly often called to suffer severely in the present life. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom" (Acts xiv. 22; Rev. vii. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 11—12).

II. Elihu answers Job's cavils. Verse 4, &c.—"I will answer thee and thy companions with thee,"—either the three friends and others present, some of whom perhaps appeared inclined to coincide with Job; or more generally, all those who entertained sentiments similar to those he had expressed—like ch. xxxiv. 8. Observe—(1) *The duty of the godly to be ready to answer for God and to correct the errors of brethren.* "Every one shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer" (Prov. xxiv. 26). Believers to know how they "ought to answer every man" (Col. iv. 6). (2) *Believers* to be careful with whom they associate, and whose sentiments they espouse.—Two considerations employed by Elihu to silence Job's cavils:—

1. God's infinite superiority to, and absolute independence of, His creatures. Verses 5—8. "Look unto the heavens and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou (hence, God who dwells above them not only incomprehensible to His creatures, but independent of and unaffected by them). If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? Thy wickedness may hurt (or affect) a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit (or affect) the son of man" (mankind, thyself or others like thee, but not God). Observe—(1) Men apt to think they lay God under an obligation by their piety or morality. God's happiness not capable of being increased or diminished by His creatures doings (Ps. xvi. 2; Jer. vii. 19). His creatures unable to give Him what is not already His own (1 Chron. xxiii. 14; Rom. ii. 35, 36). No good either possessed or practised by man but is received from God Himself. (2.) Man apt to forget the distance between the creature and the Creator. Infinite condescension on the part of God to regard man as He does. David's language that of wisdom and piety: "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. xviii. 4; cxliv. 3.) Self-humiliation in God to behold the things that are in heaven and on the earth (Ps. cxiii. 6). Condescension and love on His part, that He receives glory from, and has pleasure in, those that fear and love, serve and trust in Him (Ps. l. 25; cxlvii. 11). (3.) Man himself affected for weal or woe by his own conduct (Is. iii. 9, 11; Prov. viii. 36; ix. 12). Reaps what he sows now, either here or hereafter (Gal. vi. 7—9.) Life and death, happiness and misery, the respective fruits of righteousness and sin (Prov. ii. 19) (4.) *A man's conduct not only productive of weal and woe to himself but also to those around him.* In the constitution of the world, one creature made to depend upon, and be affected for good or evil by, another. Each made either a blessing or a curse to his neighbour. One man's sin likely to be another's misery as well as his own. The piety of one the profit of another as well as of himself. A godly man a blessing to the neighbourhood; an ungodly one its bane. Both a conscious and an unconscious influence exercised by each on those around him, either for good or evil. *Unconscious* often more effective than *conscious* influence. Each responsible to God for both. A man with a loving and Christlike spirit a perpetual benefaction. Such a spirit perceived in society as the perfume carried about on one's person. All men like boys writing with invisible ink. An impression left upon thousands by our spirit, words, and conduct, to be only known and seen hereafter.—*H. W. Beecher.* (5.) The sky over our head fitted to correct man's low and erroneous conceptions of the Divine Being. Profitable to "look unto the heavens," and to study the lessons taught by the starry firmament. The nocturnal sky "Nature's system of Divinity." God's ever open Bible

"His universal temple, hung
With lustres, with innumerable lights,
That shed religion on the soul, at once
The temple and the preacher.—
His love lets down these silver chains of light
To draw up men's ambition to Himself,
And bind his chaste affections to His throne.—
One sun by day, by night ten thousand shine,
And light us deep into the Deity."

2. The cause of men's continued misery and God's apparent disregard, to be found not in God but in themselves. Verses 8, 13.—"By reason of the multitude of oppression, they make the oppressed to cry (or simply, 'men cry'); they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty (the violence of tyrants and the ungodly rich). But none saith (under his trouble, in a grateful remembrance of past mercies and prayerful dependence for present aid), where is God my Maker (*Heb.*, 'my makers,' as Is. liv. 5; Ecc. xii. 1; probably with allusion to Gen. i. 26—indicating the plurality of Divine persons and the fulness of Divine perfections in the one God), who giveth songs in the night? who teacheth us more than (or 'above') the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven. There (in their afflicted and oppressed condition) they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men (who cause them by their cruelty and violence to cry out under their affliction). Surely God will not hear vanity (vain prayers that are destitute of faith or piety, and only extorted by suffering); neither will the Almighty regard it" (viz., so long as they remain impenitent). From the whole passage, Observe—(1) *Men often made to suffer grievously from the oppression and tyranny of others.* Witness the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. i. 2). Possible allusion made by Elihu to the case of Job himself. (2) *Men's cries under oppression and trouble not always followed with Divine deliverance.* "They cry, but none giveth answer." (3) *The reason of such unanswered cries not in God, but in the sufferers themselves.* Elihu indicates some

Reasons for continued suffering.

1. *Men do not pray to God in their affliction.* They "cry" and "cry out," but do not pray. Men's cries in trouble often not *to* God but *against* Him. Sufferers often cry to men, and cry out *of* men, without praying to God. All cries not prayer. Cries in suffering only heard and answered when they are *cries to God.*

2. *Prayer made in trouble not answered, because not right prayers.* "God will not hear vanity." God hears only the prayer of piety or of penitence—the prayer of His servants or of those who desire to become such. No promise to impenitent prayers. "God heareth not sinners," continuing such (John ix. 31). "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. lxvi. 18). "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood" (Is. i. 15). "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. xxviii. 9; i. 28—30). "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James iv. 3). Penitence and purity necessary to prevailing prayer. "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. ii. 8). The prayer of the upright is God's delight (Prov. xv. 8). The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit (Ps. li. 17). Men may kneel upon their beds without being humbled in their hearts (Hos. vii. 14). Prayer is vanity when—(1) Without sincerity; (2) Without repentance; (3) Without faith. Prayer without faith is like faith without works,—dead, being alone (James ii. 17). Earnest and believing prayer either receives the thing asked or something better.

3. Deliverance not experienced, *on account of forgetfulness of God.* Verse 10.—"None saith, where is God my Maker?" Men suffering at the hand of others apt to think more of the creature than the Creator (Is. li. 12, 13). God not acknowledged by the unregenerate either in their mercies or their afflictions. God's object in afflicting men, to bring them to Himself. The prayer of the sufferer unanswered till the object is secured, or answered in wrath (Ps. civ. 15). Affliction blessed when men turn to God and inquire after Him. Men, since the fall, naturally forgetful of God. Forgetfulness of God the sin that fills hell with inhabitants (Ps. ix. 17). Men under suffering apt to inquire after men's help rather than God's. Asa, in his affliction, sought not unto the Lord, but unto physicians (2 Chron. xvi. 12). Righteous that God should disregard men who willingly forget Him. Seriously to inquire after God the first step in true repentance. Observe—God to be remembered in affliction as our "Maker." Our Maker, who is also our Redeemer, has the best right to our remembrance. To turn to Him who made us, our first duty in affliction. He who made us cannot but be able to help and deliver us. Our wisdom, when suffering at the hands of men, to turn from the creature to the Creator. Sin to be acknowledged in not having served and followed our Maker. In consequence of the Fall, God to be inquired and sought after as one who is lost. Affliction naturally finds men "without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). God however to be found. Not far from every one of us. Savingly found in Christ (John xiv. 6 2 Cor. v. 17).

4. *Deliverance not vouchsafed on account of ingratitude for past mercies.* "Who giveth songs in the night." Past songs not to be forgotten in present sufferings. A thankful remembrance of past mercies the best way to obtain present deliverances. Remembrance of past triumphs a precious help under present troubles. "Because Thou hast been my help," &c. (Ps. lxiii. 7). The recollection of God's past kindness David's sweetest comfort in his most crushing trial (Ps. xlii. 6). Forgetfulness of Divine mercies one of our greatest sins (Is. i. 2, 3). The natural heart forgetful of God's benefits as well as His being. The part of grace to resist this tendency (Ps. ciii. 2).

Two reasons on the part of God why He should be remembered and sought to under affliction and suffering:—

First reason: He gives

Songs in the Night.

Observe—

1. *What He gives.* "Songs." God the giver of songs. Songs the expression—(1) Of *joy and gladness*; (2) Of *praise and thanksgiving*. God happy Himself, and delights in making His creatures happy. According to His nature to give songs rather than sorrows. To give joy, His delight; to cause sorrow, His strange act. God is love; and the nature of love to give songs. The songs that God gives are—(1) The *sweetest*; (2) The *holiest*; (3) The *most lasting*. Satan also gives songs,—short songs the prelude to lasting sorrows. The world gives songs—songs often sung to a heavy heart. All songs but those that God gives to be one day turned into howlings (Amos viii. 3). The instrument gives forth its sweetest music under the hands of Him that made it.

2. *When He gives songs.* "In the night." *First:* In the *natural night* (Ps. xlii. 8). Night the time of reflection and meditation. Satan makes men *howl* upon their beds; God makes them *sing* upon them (Hos. vii. 14; Ps. cxlix. 5). God gives songs when there is nothing else to give them—in the night. Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight (Acts xvi. 25). Musing on our bed the fire burns, and we rise at midnight to give thanks (Ps. xxxix. 3; cxix. 62).—*Second:* In the *night of trouble* (chap. xxxvi. 20). God gives songs in the night—(1) Of personal affliction; (2) Of temporal adversity; (3) Of painful bereavement; (4) Of persecution from the world; (5) Of spiritual darkness and desertion; (6) Of death and its solemn approaches (Hab. iii. 17, 18; Acts xvi. 25; Hos. ii. 14, 15; Ps. xxiii. 4). No night of trouble too dark for God to give songs in it. Jesus sung a hymn with His disciples in the darkest night of His earthly life. John sung songs of joy and praise as an exile in Patmos, and Paul and Silas as prisoners in Philippi. God gives songs to His people when it is night to others as well as themselves. Israel had light in their dwellings when all Egypt was covered with darkness.

3. *How God gives songs in the night.*—(1) By *bringing into trouble*; (2) By *comforting under it*; (3) By *delivering out of it* (Hos. ii. 14; Ps. xxiii. 4). The songs God gives, generally "songs of deliverance" (Ps xxxii. 7). God puts songs into the mouth by putting gladness into the heart (Ps. iv. 7). Puts a new song into our mouth by setting our feet upon a rock (Ps. xl. 2, 3). God gives songs in the night by sending and showing us a Saviour (Luke ii. 8). The office of Jesus to give "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Is. lxi. 3).

Second reason: He "teacheth us more than the beasts," &c.—(1) His *special regard* to His intelligent creatures, a reason for their seeking to Him in time of trouble. God cares for the lower animals, how much more for man? Man made rational and intelligent after his Maker's likeness. (2) The *faculties* with which God has endowed man, a reason why he should seek Him in trouble. Reason given to enable us to know God, and to understand that He is the helper and deliverer of all who truly seek Him. To be in trouble without inquiring after God, more the part of a *beast* than a man. Beasts cry in their sufferings, but unable to think of God in them. Sin degrades men below the brute creation. Beasts howl but cannot pray: men can pray but do not. Faculties given to *beasts* to apprehend the creature: to *man* to apprehend the *Creator*. A beast able to know the will of his master; a man to know the will of his God. Understanding given to the beasts to enable them to attend to their *bodily* wants and those of their offspring; a higher understanding given to man to enable him to attend also to his *spiritual* wants and those of others. Beasts endowed with sufficient intelligence for the preservation of themselves and others in the *present life*; man endowed with an intelligence to enable him to secure happiness for himself and others in the *life to come*. The understanding or instinct of the lower animals ever the same; the understanding of man capable of continual increase.

III. Elihu exhorts Job to patience and hope. Verse 14.—"Although (or 'even when') thou sayest thou shalt not see Him (enjoy His returning favour; or, 'thou dost not see Him,' *i.e.*, understand His procedure),

yet judgment is before Him (He ever acts according to judgment; or, 'the case is before Him'—under His consideration); therefore trust thou in Him."

Notice—

1. A *temptation* or *complaint supposed.*—(1) *A temptation to despondency.* "Thou sayst thou shalt not see him." Job at times hard pressed with it (chap. xvii. 15). Yet enabled to overcome it (chap. xix. 26, 27). The part of believers to resist temptation (Ps. xlii. 5—11). To a believer the sun is only hidden by a cloud, not set. The hiding of God's face no proof that He neglects our cause. Is glorified when He is trusted in the dark (Heb. iii. 17, 18). Or—(2) *A complaint of darkness.* "Thou sayest thou dost not see him." Job's trial that he was unable to comprehend God's dealings (chap. ix. 11). God's dealings with His people often dark, mysterious, and incomprehensible. Christ's words to Peter spoken for the consolation of tried believers through all time,—"What I do, thou knowest not *now;* but thou shalt know hereafter" (John xiii. 7).

2. *A truth stated.* "Judgment is before him." God's dealings may be dark, but are never doubtful. While clouds of darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the basis of His throne (Ps. xcvii. 2; lxxxix. 14). Purposes of wisdom and goodness in every event, though unknown to us. A God of truth and without iniquity. The cause of the poor and afflicted believer never really, though sometimes apparently, overlooked. "I have seen, I have seen, the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them." Joseph's case in the pit and then in the prison. Jacob's in Canaan: "All these things are against me." Job's case at present. Believers made to pass through fire and water, but are brought out into a wealthy place (Ps. lxvi. 12).

3. *An exhortation addressed.* "Trust thou in him."

Trust in God.

The believer's grand recipe in darkness and trouble. Implies—(1) Faith; (2) Hope; (3) Patience. Faith in God's promise and perfections; hope of His deliverance; patience to wait His time for it. God delivers His people, but in His own time and way. Tarry thou the Lord's leisure. The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it (Ps. xxxvii. 7—34; Hab. ii. 3) Sinners not immediately punished, nor saints immediately delivered. Trust in God founded in the knowledge of Him. They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee (Ps. ix. 10). *God* to be trusted in, not an idol bearing His name; God as revealed in His Word, not as formed by our own imagination. To be trusted in as a God of justice as well as mercy. True trust in God founded on the atonement of His Son. God in Christ the revealed object of a sinner's trust. Christ the only way to the Father. Trust in God implies trust in—(1) His goodness; (2) His wisdom; (3) His faithfulness; (4) His justice; (5) His power. God in Christ to be trusted in by the sinner for pardon; by the saint for purity. To be trusted in by believers—(1) In deepest darkness; (2) Under greatest discouragements; (3) In danger and difficulty; (4) In the absence of all help from ourselves and others; (5) In the face of all appearances. Trust, the grace that brings the greatest glory to God and the greatest comfort to ourselves (Isa. xii. 2; Rom. iv. 20).

IV. Elihu reproves Job's obstinacy. Verses 15, 16.—"But now because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger (or, 'because it is not so [that] his anger has visited,' viz., Job, for his irreverent and unbecoming speeches), yet he knoweth it not in great extremity (or, 'and He [viz., God] hath not taken severe cognizance of his transgression'); therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain (in vain and foolish complaints against God, without either reason or success); he multiplieth words without knowledge" [either of God or himself]. One of the most obscure passages in the book. Elihu's object to reprove Job either—(1) Because, while God was chastising, Job was still sinning by his rebellious murmurs; or (2) Because while God was forbearing to punish Job's irreverent speeches, Job still continued to indulge in them. Observe—(1) An evil case—(i.) when God chastises, and we are either blind to the chastening or harden ourselves under it; (ii.) when God's forbearance is abused to a continuance in sin. (2) A child of God not always like himself in temptation and trial. Asaph's confession: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 22). A believer never entirely free from his old carnal nature in this life. Innate corruption liable at times to break out with great violence. God's forbearance required as well in the case of a saint as of a sinner. David's prayer needful for every child of God: "Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins" (Ps. xix. 13). A strict watch required to be kept over heart and lips in time of temptation and trouble. A tendency in the best to impatience under intense and protracted suffering. New Testament grace required in order to fulfil the New Testament precept: "Rejoice evermore; in everything give thanks" (1 Thess. v. 16, 18). The be-

hever's privilege as well as duty to "glory in tribulation" (Rom. v. 3). Not too much, under the New Testament supplies of the Spirit, to be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness" (Col. i. 11).

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ELIHU'S FOURTH SPEECH

No reply being made to Elihu's preceding address, he resumes. Verse 1.—"Elihu also proceded and said." His object to bring Job to a more becoming state of mind in reference to God's dealings with him. Aims, like Job's three friends, at showing that God is not to be charged with injustice by any of his creatures.

I. His Introduction (verses 2—4).

1. *Bespeaks Job's farther patience and attention.* Verse 2.—"Suffer (wait for, or bear with) me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak in God's behalf" (or, "that there are yet arguments for God"). Elihu makes good his own statement: "I am full of matter." "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters; and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook." "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Prov. xviii. 4; xx. 5). The promise to believers in New Testament times: "Out of them shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38). On the day of Pentecost, believers, filled with the Holy Ghost, spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts ii. 4). Observe—(1) Patient attention to spiritual teaching not always easy to the flesh. (2) Wise in a public teacher to draw as little as possible on the patience of his hearers. Brevity, as far as consistent with faithfulness to the truth and the hearer's interests, to be constantly aimed at. The matter spoken to be carefully arranged, and the words employed to be few and well chosen. Prolixity, digression, and repetition to be avoided. (3) Elihu's wisdom in making breaks in his discourse, and in pausing at times for a reply. His speeches four or five instead of one. (4) Well to be ready to speak for God, in the presence either of friends or foes. Elihu's task to speak as an advocate for God against Job, who had appeared to take the place of an accuser. The part of wisdom to know how to speak for God, and to give a suitable answer to men's cavils and complaints.

2. *Promises a thorough and satisfactory treatment of the subject in hand.* Verse 3.—"I will fetch my knowledge from afar" (from the widely-extended departments of God's works; from principles long and everywhere acknowledged; from deep thought and mature consideration). Elihu's knowledge like Solomon's "deep waters." *Preachers to ponder and study well the subjects on which they are to speak.* Dr. Guthrie commenced his preparations for the Sabbath on the preceding Monday, and thus kept his discourses '*simmering*' in his mind all the week Sermons to carry evidence of close thought and thorough acquaintance with the subjects treated. To be confirmed by solid arguments and commended by apt illustrations.—The subject and aim of Elihu's discourse: "I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." His subject—*the justice of God's dealings in Providence;* his aim—to *exhibit and defend that justice.* His arguments for God especially in relation to His righteousness as the Governor of the Universe. Job had apparently questioned that righteousness (ch. xxvii. 2; xxxiv. 5—12). Wise in preachers to have a *distinct subject* and a *clear aim* in their discourses.

3. *Assures Job of the sincerity as well as correctness of his sentiments.* Verse 4.—"For truly my words shall not be false (either *subjectively*, as spoken against my conscience to serve some by-end or selfish purpose—a sin of which Job had accused his three friends; nor *objectively*, as being untrue in themselves in relation to the subject treated, as if vindicating God's ways by unsound arguments). He that is perfect in knowledge (or, one sincere in his opinions and mature in his knowledge of the subject in hand—no novice or tyro, albeit young in years) is with thee." Observe—(1) *A religious teacher to be true both in himself and in his teaching.* Truth to be spoken, and to be spoken *as truth*, and not as *fiction.* The speaker to be true both in the manner and matter of his discourse. The truth to be spoken *in truthfulness.* What we speak to be *truth*, and to be believed and accepted by ourselves as such. "We speak," said the Model Teacher, "what we do know, and testify what we have seen." (2) *A preacher to be sound in his knowledge and in the use he makes of it.* Timothy exhorted to "study to show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" Titus, to use "sound speech that

cannot be condemned" (2 Tim. ii. 15; Tit. ii. 8). The means of attaining this: "Give attendance to reading; meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15, 16). Teachers of others to be not babes but men of full age in understanding, whatever they may be in years (Heb. v. 12—14). The Scriptures given "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 17).

III. Elihu's defence of God (verses 5—15). "Behold," &c. What is about to be spoken is—(1) Worthy of all attention; (2) Patent to everyone, and not for a moment to be questioned. Elihu grounds his defence—

1. On God's *attributes*. Verse 5.—"God is mighty, and despiseth not any; he is mighty in strength and wisdom." Adduces—(1) His *power*. "God is mighty." Omnipotent and able to accomplish all His pleasure throughout the universe. Hence under no temptation to be unrighteous. Injustice allied to weakness. The mighty scorn to be unjust. (2) His *kindness*. "He despiseth not any." In opposition to Job's insinuation (chap. x. 3; xix. 7; xxiii. 13). Though mighty, He scorns not the meanest. Though high, He hath respect to the lowly. Slights no creature's cause or interests. The contrast of earth's mighty ones. No creature too minute or insignificant in God's eyes for His care and attention. A sparrow not forgotten before Him. His power no impediment to His providence. His greatness enables Him to pay attention to the tiniest insect as well as to the mightiest angel. To Omnipotence and Omniscience an atom an object of attention as well as a sun. God the universal Parent. All creatures, great and small, His own. All created by Him and for Him. All dependent on Him for life and all things. The universe a proof that He is mighty, yet "despiseth not any." The animalcule, invisible to the naked eye, a testimony to His condescension and care, as well as to His power and wisdom. The animating reflection of Mungo Park from the appearance of a small moss in the solitary African desert: "Can that Being, thought I, who planted, watered, and brought to perfection in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after His own image? Surely not." The attribute in the text appropriated by Jesus in reference to sinners applying to Him for salvation. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). His own incarnation and death on man's behalf the most illustrious confirmation of the text (Ps. viii. 4; Heb. ii. 6, &c.). (3) His *wisdom*. "He is mighty in strength and wisdom" (*Heb.*, "in strength of heart," perhaps including generosity and kindness, as parallel to the preceding clause). God's omniscience as real as His omnipotence. His wisdom equal to His power. In God infinite power directed by infinite wisdom and employed by infinite goodness. Scripture reveals God's *heart* as well as His *arm*. Hence God a Father and a Friend, instead of a tyrant and a terror to His creatures. The object of love and trust as well as of reverence and fear. The tiniest creature the monument of His skill. All nature a testimony to His heart as well as to His hand.

2. On God's *dealings in Providence* (verse 6). His dealings—(1) In respect to the ungodly. "He preserveth not the life of the wicked," *i.e.*, always. Suffers, or causes them, if continuing wicked, sooner or later, to perish. Usually, however, not till after long patience. Examples:—Pharaoh; Sodom and Gomorrha; the antediluvian world. The ungodly preserved for a time by God—(i.) For His own purposes (Rom. ix. 17); (ii). To afford space for repentance (Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9—15). (2) In respect to the poor: "But giveth right to the poor,"—the oppressed and afflicted; not without respect to their *spirit* as well as their circumstances. Maintains their cause against oppressors, and sooner or later, in one way or other, delivers them. Example: Israelites in Egypt. Same truth in similar language (Ps. cxl. 12, and elsewhere in the Psalms). Applied by Jesus to His suffering Church (Luke xviii. 8). Maintained by Elihu against Job's complaints and frequent appearances. Might often suffered to take the place of right. Yet "there is a God that judgeth in the earth." The language of Elihu both a rebuke and an encouragement to Job. If poor, he should sooner or later have right given him, notwithstanding his complaint (chap. xxvii. 2). Observe—God's people "poor" in this world, both in respect to their spirit and their position. Their posture one of patience and hope. Their cause, however, maintained by God. "A righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (2 Thes. i. 6, 7). *Then*, if not sooner, right given to the poor. (3) In respect to the righteous. First, in *exercising continual care over them*. Verse 7.—"He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous," however they may seem at times to be overlooked and forsaken by Him. The case of

Noah already a well-known example. Joseph in Egypt an example of a later period. Righteous Abel died indeed by his brother's hand, but his blood not forgotten by Jehovah (Gen. iv. 10). The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (Ps. xxxiv. 15). The comfort of God's people in all circumstances. At times almost forgotten and questioned by the afflicted and tempted patriarch. "Thou God seest me," a well of refreshment for tried believers.—Second; in *exalting them.* "But with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them (or, "yea, kings on the throne, He doth even make them sit") for ever, and they are exalted." Even on earth the righteous often exalted, out of great affliction, to dignity and honour. Joseph and David examples. So far from neglecting the godly, God sooner or later exalts them,—sometimes to an earthly throne, always to a heavenly one (1 Sam. ii. 3; Ps. cxiii. 8). "Out of prison he cometh to reign" (Ecc. iv. 14). Every believer made a king as well as a priest (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6; v. 10). Their kingdom an everlasting one (Dan. vii. 18). *God's providence and care extended over godly rulers.* His eyes not withdrawn from kings on the throne. Earthly rulers from God Himself. "He putteth down one and setteth up another." "By Me kings reign" (Prov. viii. 15, 16; Rom. xiii. 1; Ps. lxxv. 7). Human rule an evidence and consequence of the Divine. Perhaps a direct allusion in the text to Job himself.—Third; In *correcting them.* Verses 8—12—"And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then He sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded (or, 'wherein they have acted proudly'). He openeth also their ear to discipline (or, 'correction'—so as to hear the lesson which that discipline is intended to teach them), and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey [the voice of the rod] and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures (or 'delights'). But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword [of Divine judgment]. They shall die without knowledge" (in their folly, or "before they are aware," *i.e.*, suddenly). Observe from the whole passage, in regard to

Divine Chastisements,

1. *Even the righteous may require correction.* True both in Old and New Testament times (1 Cor. xi. 32; Rev. iii. 19). In Elihu's judgment, Job's case at present. Though the godly may not live in sin, they may fall into it, and for a time continue in it. Examples: Noah; Abraham; David; Peter. Every sin has its root in a believer's heart. "Foolishness bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction driveth it out" (Prov xxii. 15).

2. *The righteous not left to remain in their sin.* Correction employed to raise them out of it (Prov. xxii. 15). "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent" (Rev. iii. 12). "For this cause (viz., sin in reference to the Lord's Supper) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep"—are dead (1 Cor. ii. 30). "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (verse 32). In Elihu's view, Job not proved to be a wicked man by his suffering, but a righteous one who has sinned, and whom God in His love is chastening.

3. *The object of chastisement to bring sin to our remembrance in order to repentance.* "He sheweth them their work and their transgressions." God's rod a speaking one (Mic. vi. 9). "Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance? —the question of the widow of Zarephath to Elijah on the death of her son.

4. *Chastening, when improved, followed by a life of enjoyment* God's rod, like Jonathan's, brings honey on the point of it. A rich blessing attendant on sanctified affliction (Ps. xciv. 12). Believers allured into the wilderness, that the Lord "may speak comfortably" to them (*Heb.*, "to their heart"). Their vineyards given them from thence, and the valley of Achor made a door of hope (Hos. ii. 14, 15).

5. *Chastisements, not improved, followed by still severer ones* "If they obey not, they shall perish by the sword." Divine chastening neither to be despised nor fainted under (Heb. xii. 5).

III. Elihu administers reproof to Job (verses 13—17).

1. *By adducing the case of the ungodly.* Ver. 13.—"But the hypocrite (or ungodly) in heart (whatever they may appear in their outward life or in the eyes of their fellowmen,) heap up wrath (increasing the Divine displeasure against them by their continuance in sin, and their impenitent stubborness under affliction—another solemn word for Job) they cry not (to God, as sinners for pardoning mercy) when He bindeth them (with the cords of affliction). They die in youth (that is, prematurely), and their life is (or 'becomes extinct') among the unclean" (*Margin*, "Sodomites,"—persons who by prostituting their bodies abridge their lives; with possible allusion to the men of Sodom, or more likely, to those who prostituted themselves in heathen temples in the service of their abominable

deities). Observe—(1) *A fearful case when a man is "a hypocrite in heart."* Christ's most solemn woes pronounced on hypocrites. Sad to be an open sinner; still more to be a secret one. Necessary to look to our outward life; still more to look to our heart (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24). (2) *The wrath of God the reward of sin, whether open or secret.* God angry with the wicked every day (Ps. vii. 11). The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. i. 18). (3) *That wrath capable of being removed by repentance and faith, or increased by impenitennce and unbelief.* "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). Wrath treasured up to themselves by the impenitent against the day of wrath (Rom. ii. 5). (4) *The mark of a hard and impenitent heart when prayer is not made to God in affliction.* (5) *Sin the cause of an unhappy life, and often of a premature death* (Ps. lv. 23; 1 Cor. xi. 30). (6) *Awful to live among sinners; still more awful to die among them.*

2. *By showing God's conduct towards the humble and afflicted.* Verse 15.—"He delivereth the poor in His affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression," to receive instruction. A reminder to Job of what had been his duty and what might have been his experience. Observe—(1) *Affliction of various kinds, whether from men or otherwise, allowed by God for wise purposes.* (2) *One of these purposes is to receive instruction.* Divine chastening connected with Divine teaching (Ps. xciv. 12). "Hear ye the rod" (Micah vi. 9). (3) *Accepted chastisement usually followed by imparted deliverance* (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42). Deliverance may be either—(i.) By removing the affliction; (ii.) By removing the afflicted to a better world; or (iii.) By filling his soul with comfort and raising him above his affliction.

3. *By applying the whole to Job's own case.* Verses 16, 17.—"Even so would He have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place where there is no straitness (or, 'out of the wide mouth of distress which has no bottom'); and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked (approving their way, imitating their example, and incurring their punishment): judgment and justice take hold on thee" (or, "will hold their place,"—causing thee still to suffer in consequence of thy rebellious speeches, instead of being delivered, as thou wouldst have been, hadst thou meekly submitted to the Divine chastening and justified God in thy affliction.) Job's sin, in Elihu's judgment, that like Israel, instead of meekly accepting the Divine chastisement, he chafed and kicked against it "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jer. xxxi. 18). Observe—(1) *The way to have chastisement removed is meekly and patiently to submit to it, and to seek its improvement* (Lam. iii. 25—32, 39—41; Mic. vii. 9). (2) *An easy thing with God to remove us out of the deepest distress and to bring us into enlargement and comfort.* The experience of the Israelites a common one with God's children (Ps. lxvi. 10—12). (3) *A well-supplied table a gift of God's providence to His obedient children.* God able to give richly all things to enjoy. Promises that our bread shall be given us, and our water shall be sure. Teaches his children both how to abound and how to suffer need. Prepares a table for them in the presence of their enemies, and makes their cup to run over (Ps. xxiii. 5). (4) *If God's people sin with the ungodly, they must expect to suffer with them.* God's dealings characterized by "judgment and justice," as well with saints as with sinners. Sin shown to be abominable and malignant wherever it is found. Sons not exempt from stripes (Ps. lxxxix. 32).

IV. Elihu's warning. Verses 18—21. —"Because (or since) there is wrath [on the part of God], beware lest He take thee away with His stroke (or chastisement): then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Will He esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces (or exertions) of strength." Observe—(1) *Appearance of wrath on the part of God not necessarily wrath.* Job's afflictions not the effect of wrath. Elihu, in this respect, almost as much in the dark as Job's three friends. Love and hatred on the part of God not known by present treatment (Eccles. ix. 1). Yet (2) *Suffering often an indication of displeasure.* "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment" (Is. liv. 8; lvii. 17). (3) *Believers and others, under chastening, to beware of further provoking God's displeasure by obstinacy and rebellion.* (4) *Chastisement, not improved, may end in death* (1 Cor. xi. 30). (5) *No human power or worldly riches able to divert the Divine displeasure.* All Herod's wealth unable to save him from the worms that ate him up (Acts xii. 23). (6) The language of Elihu to be taken as in general a

Warning to Sinners.

1. *Their* DANGER. "There is wrath." God angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all sin. Must exist till sin is atoned for, re-

pented of, and forgiven. Sin draws to itself the lightning of Divine wrath. That wrath displayed in the expulsion of the angels from heaven, of man from paradise, and of the Jews from their own land. Exhibited in the destruction of the Old World by water, and of the Cities of the Plain by fire. Most of all seen in the suffering and death of the Son of God standing as the sinner's Surety. God's wrath must consume either the sinner himself or his substitute. The meaning of sacrifices. Christ the thunder-rod that drew down that wrath on Himself in order to draw it off from man. God's wrath is—(1) *Righteous*—the just reward of sin; (2) *Holy*—infinitely removed from sinful passion; (3) *Intolerable*—as the wrath of man's Creator and Judge; (4) *Unabatable and unremovable* by creature power. That wrath all the more dreadful to the impenitent and unbelieving as the "Wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16).

2. *Their* DUTY. "Beware, lest He take thee away with His stroke." Implies—(1) *An awaking to consciousness and consideration of one's peril.* "Stop, poor sinner, stop and think!" (2) A *halting in one's present course.* Illustrations: The prodigal at the swine-trough; the penitent thief. (3) *Earnest inquiry as to the way of deliverance.* Illustrations: The converted murderers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost—Men and brethren, what must we do? Saul of Tarsus—Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The Philippian jailer—Sirs, what must I do to be saved? No safety but in the Lord's own way. Any other ends only in death. (4) *Immediate obedience to Divine direction.* That direction—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. Come unto Me and I will give you rest. No safety for a sinner but at the cross where the wrath alighted and was extinguished. Dangerous to delay in obeying the direction. Lot not to tarry in all the plain. No safety till inside of Zoar. An hour after God shut Noah and his family in the ark, too late for refuge. A step outside the City of Refuge, and the manslayer might perish. The three thousand at Pentecost gladly received the Word and were baptized. The jailer believed and was saved before daybreak. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

3. *Their* DOOM, *if neglecting it*: "Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." No chance of deliverance after death to the unsaved sinner. A "great ransom" already provided. Nothing less than the blood of God's own Son made flesh. Able to satisfy Divine justice for the sins of a world. Delivers every sinner who trusts in it. Delivered the thief upon the cross, Saul the persecutor, and Christ's own murderers. A cloud of witnesses, both in heaven and on earth, to the value of the ransom. Available, however, only on this side of death. After death the judgment. An impassable gulf fixed between heaven and hell. Purgatory a priestly fiction. Rejectors of Christ's proffer here, punished with everlasting destruction from His presence hereafter. The hand that shut Noah in the ark shut all the world out.—The blood of Jesus pleads for pardon to all who trust in it,—punishment on all who trample on it (Heb. ix. 13, 14; x. 26–29). A day when even the blood of God's Son cannot save a soul. Much less anything else. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

V. Elihu's admonition. Verses 20, 21.—"Desire not the night (of death,—probable allusion to Job's wish, chap. vii. 15), when people are cut off in their place (or, go up [as chaff in a whirlwind] 'to their place'). Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction" (or, "meek submission;" or, "in consequence of affliction"). Job's temptation twofold: (1) To desire death rather than continuance in his present affliction; (2) To sin or cast off religion in consequence of it. The latter especially Satan's aim. Observe—

1. *No sin to which a believer may not be tempted.* "Scarcely a temptation except that of covetousness, which Luther did not experience."—*Spurgeon.* The Head tempted to the grossest of all sins,—the worship of the devil for worldly gain and worldly glory; no marvel if the members should be so too. No attainment in grace sufficient to exempt a believer from temptation. Christ taken to the *Holy City* to be tempted, and there placed on a *pinnacle of the temple.* Temple-pinnacles places for the most terrible temptations. The measure of grace shown not in being free from temptations, but in overcoming them. Gold, not pinchbeck, submitted to the crucible.

2. *Temptations only sinful when succumbed to.* Job sorely tempted to curse God, yet only blessed Him. Tempted to renounce religion, yet only clung to it the closer. Not temptation, but sinning in it, hurts the soul.

3. *Common to be tempted to sin in order to escape suffering.* Christ tempted to distrust God and work a miracle, to escape the pangs of hunger. Daniel tempted to abstain from prayer, to escape the lion's den. The three captive youths tempted to worship the golden image, to escape the fiery furnace. Peter tempted to deny his Master, to escape his fate. Cranmer tempted to recant, to escape

the fires of martyrdom. Believers tempted to choose sin rather than suffering, yet, through grace, prefer suffering to sinning. Peter repented of his sin, and met a martyr's death. Cranmer recanted his recantation, and embraced the flames.

VI. Elihu directs attention to the Divine perfections (verses 22, 23). "Behold," &c. With a view to bring Job to submission, he exhibits—

1. *The power of God.* Verse 22.—"God exalteth (*i.e.*, men; or simply, 'is exalted') by His power." God exalted in Himself, and exalts the lowly. None so reduced but Divine power can restore him. Exalted Joseph from a dungeon to the throne of Egypt. God's power employed as well in exalting the humble as in abasing the proud.

2. *His condescension.* "Who teacheth like Him?" (or, who is like Him as a teacher, ruler, or master?) God's power makes Him a ruler; His condescension, a teacher of His creatures (Ps. xciv. 10). Observe in reference to—

Divine Teaching:

1. *Its excellence.* As a Teacher, God is—(1) Perfectly acquainted with the *subjects which He teaches*, and which we require to be taught. (2) Understands the *capacity and capabilities of the taught.* (3) Knows the *best and most effectual way of teaching them.* (4) Able by His power to *give effect to His instructions.* Instructs with a strong hand (Is. viii. 11). (5) *Has patience* with the dulness of His scholars. (6) *Carries them to the highest degree of knowledge.* Makes them ultimately to know even as they are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12). (7) *Exalts them* by His teaching to *His own moral excellence.* Conformity to His own image the end of His teaching. The effect of human teaching often to make men proud. Knowledge puffeth up. God's teaching *humbles* while it exalts. Human teaching often leaves men depraved and immoral. Attainments in knowledge not always attainments in virtue. Divine teaching purifies the *heart*, while it enlightens the *mind.* God teaches men in order to save them.—2. The *necessity* of Divine teaching. As fallen men, need Divine teaching to restore them. "Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. iv. 18). Men need teaching that gives *life* as well as *light.* One of Christ's offices as Redeemer, that of Prophet or Teacher. Is made "wisdom" to us as well as "righteousness," &c.—3. The *means* of Divine teaching: God teaches (1) By His *Word;* (2) By His *works;* (3) By His Providential dealings; (4) By His Spirit. His teaching connected with His chastening (Ps. xciv. 12).—4. The *subjects* of Divine teaching God teaches us to know—(1) *Ourselves*, both as creatures and as sinners. The celebrated maxim: "Know thyself," only truly learned under Divine teaching. (2) Our *duty*, both to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. (3) Our *happiness*—wherein it consists, and how it is secured. (4) *Virtue* or holiness—its nature, excellence, and means of attainment. (5) *Sin*—its nature, malignity, and consequences. (6) *Salvation*, or the way of deliverance from sin and its effects. (7) *God Himself*, in His being, His perfections, and the relations He sustains to mankind. (8) *Jesus Christ*, in His person, His offices, and His work as our Redeemer (John xvii. 2, 3).

3. *His supremacy and independence.* Verse 23.—"Who hath enjoined Him His way?" (has charged Him how He is to act, and may call Him to account for His conduct). Deity admits of no superior or director. From the Creator's tribunal no appeal to a higher court.

4. His *justice and holiness.* "Who can (will or dare to) say to him, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" Connected with preceding clause. (1) There is none to charge God with a dereliction of duty. (2) There can be no ground for such a charge. Iniquity possibly found in human rulers; none in the Supreme. The creature's interests safe in the hands of the Creator. Iniquity in God the ruin of the universe. The blasphemous presumption supposed in the text, implied in all quarrelling with God's providence. The sin to which Job had been chiefly tempted. The temptation to which men under severe trials are especially exposed.

VII. Job's duty in reference to the Creator and His works. Verse 24.—"Remember that thou magnify his work (both his actual working and the products of it), which men behold (or 'praise'). Every man may see it; men may behold it afar off" (so glorious and conspicuous is it). Observe—(1) *Trouble apt to shut out God and His work from our thoughts.* The tendency of suffering and trial to draw our attention more to ourselves than our Maker. In dwelling on our own griefs, we are apt to forget His glory. (2) *Our duty, as intelligent creatures, to observe and magnify God's work.* God's works made to be remembered (Ps. cxi. 4). (3) *Man's distinction, as a creature, that he is capable of admiring and praising God's work.* Other creatures only capable of rendering unconscious praise. The lower animals made to rejoice in the *effects* of God's work; man to praise and magnify the work

itself. Man alone of terrestrial creatures capable of perceiving the wisdom, power, and goodness in the Creator's work. Hence (i) his greater capacity for happiness; (ii) his responsibility. (4) *God's work such as to demand the praise and admiration of intelligent creatures.* His work honourable and glorious (Ps. cxi. 3). His works the reflection of Himself and the exponents of His perfections. The heavens declare His glory. All His works praise Him. Infinite wisdom, power, and goodness impressed on the work of His hands. His attributes displayed as well in His work of Providence as of creation. (5) *God's work admired and praised by men, especially the good, in all ages.* "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein" (Ps. cxi. 2). Some of the earliest poetry hymns in praise of God's work. (6) *God's work everywhere visible and conspicuous.* "Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off." God never without a witness to Himself from His works, giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons (Acts xiv. 17). His work threefold—

1. *Creation.* In creation, God calls into existence and gives shape and character to what thus exists. Creation itself a fact of reason and revelation. Everything must have a cause, and marks of design prove a designer. The *process* of creation, briefly indicated in the beginning of the Book of Genesis. The Scriptures "by far the most ancient and the only thoroughly trustworthy record" of the work of creation. Other accounts preserved in various heathen countries, doubtless, in their origin related to the Hebrew one. Nearly all commence, like that of Genesis, with a primitive chaos of matter, empty and dark, on which the Creator acted. Science able to say nothing as to the one first cause. Its instruments inadequate to discern the spiritual cause, asserted by the Bible to be behind all natural phenomena. Knows, and can know of itself, nothing of the origin of the world, either in regard to the matter composing it or the forces operating in it. The language in Genesis that of accommodation. Every creation-act accomplished by a *word of command*, as the fullest representation of the kind of power exerted. The work, both as to matter and form, simply a *will* on the part of the Creator. Materials for later stages in creation ready at hand in the results of the earlier. At each stage a special *fiat*, consistent with a gradual development, and new Divine impulse. A perfect universe not created at once, but slowly built up step by step.—*Warrington's Week of Creation.* What appears at first as the results of one period of creation, actually that of many. The rocks disclose a series of creations previous to that of man, separated from each other by thousands of years. The rocks themselves, to a large extent, the result of those previous creations. Limestone rocks almost entirely composed of the remains of shell fish. The *products* and proof of God's creation-work everywhere before us. Embrace both the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual. Man both spiritual and material—a microcosm or universe in himself. God's works of creation claim our admiration both for their magnitude and minuteness; their multiplicity and variety; their perfection and beauty; their complexity and order; their extent and mutual adaptation.

2. *Providence.* Consists in the preserving and governing the creatures made, and conducting them to the end for which they were created. The creatures dependent on God for their preservation as well as their creation. In Him we live and move, as well as have our being. The end of creation the Creator's own glory. His work of Providence the steps by which that end is secured. Its operation discovered in what at first sight appears to have been the work of creation The creatures whose remains lie imbedded in the rocks, and to a considerable extent compose them, the ancient objects of God's providence. The formation of the rocks themselves due to the same providence, acting for millions of years previous to man's appearance on the earth. Provision made by God's providence, in those distant ages, for man's future residence and comfort, as well in the coal-beds prepared for his fuel by the growth of primeval forests, as in the rocks which should furnish the soil he was to cultivate, and the material with which he was to build his dwelling. God's work of providence extends to the lowest as well as the highest of His creatures. The fall of a sparrow under His direction as well as the revolution of a world. The animalcule, invisible to the naked eye, cared for by it as well as the sun with its diameter of a million miles. That work embraces the rise and fall of empires, the progress and decay of states, and the affairs of the humblest individuals that compose them. All history but the exponent of Divine providence. Its operations continually before our eyes, and often such as to arrest the attention even of the thoughtless. Visible in the miseries and calamities, as well as in the blessings and deliverances experienced among men. Under Divine providence, virtue in general, and in the end, rewarded, though frequently permitted, for a time, to be tried and purified by suffering—the case exhibited in this book. Vice in general, and in the end, punished, though often allowed, for a time, to prosper and

triumph. Many things in God's work of providence, as in that of creation, mysterious to us in our present imperfect condition. Among these the permission of evil. His providence seen, not only in permitting it, but in overruling it for His own glory—"from seeming evil still educing good."

3. *Redemption.*—Properly a special part of God's work of providence. Its most glorious part, and that to which both creation and providence are subservient. Redemption the deliverance and restoration of fallen men by the incarnation and life, the suffering and death, the resurrection and ascension of the Son of God, as well as by the mission and operation of the Holy Ghost The work in which God has chosen, most of all, to exhibit His perfections. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10, 11). God's work of Redemption established upon man's fall, which it includes as its foundation. Embraces the call of Abraham, and the selection of a part of his posterity to be, for a time, the special field of its development, preparatory to the extension of its blessings to all the nations of the earth. Included, as a farther preparation, the union of the nations in successive universal empires, culminating in the Roman, in which the work was to receive its principal development. Embraced the mission of the Apostles for the proclamation of the Redemption among all nations, and the establishment of the New Testament for its experience and further exhibition. Included the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, thus terminating a religion of symbols after it had served its purpose, and affording a standing evidence to the truth of the Scriptures which announce and unfold the Redemption. Comprehends the spread of the Gospel and the conversion of the nations to Christianity, with all the events, movements, and arrangements of Divine providence conducing to it; as—the general diffusion of the Greek language as the channel for the early promulgation of the Gospel; the free communication among the nations, through the extension of the Roman empire and its universal net-work of roads; the breaking up of the Roman Empire, and the settlement of the Northern nations in the provinces of Southern Europe; the persecutions of the Church, and the dispersion of its members and teachers; the preservation of a faithful remnant in the midst of corruption and apostasy in the Church itself; the Reformation, and the various steps conducting to it, as the revival of learning, the invention of printing, and the general aspiration after liberty; the discovery of America, and the planting, in its northern portion, of a nation of Protestants who should occupy it with the Gospel, and disseminate it in its purity and power in other lands; the increasing power and influence of Protestant nations, as England and Prussia, and the decay of Popish ones, as Spain and Portugal; the discovery of the maritime passage to India, and the subsequent transfer of its numerous millions from the sway of a Popish to that of a Protestant nation; the defeated attempts of Mahommedanism to overspread Europe, and of Popery to crush Protestantism in England and the Netherlands; the French Revolution, which aroused both the Church and the world, preparing the one to communicate and the other to receive the Gospel; the almost simultaneous formation of societies for the spread of the Gospel in foreign lands, as the Bible, Tract, and Missionary Societies of Great Britain; the overthrow of the Pope's temporal sway by the Italian people, and the crippling of the power of France which had been its chief support. The work of redemption the sum of all God's dealings in providence. All past history but the unravelling of God's eternal plan concerning our race, and the working out of that redemption provided for it. Redemption both the key and the keystone of history. Runs through its entire course, like the scarlet cord said to run through all the cables of the Royal Navy. Finds its realization in the conversion of every believer's soul.

VIII. Returns to the perfections of God as exhibited in the operations of nature, especially in the production of rain and the phenomena of a thunderstorm. Verses 26—33.—"Behold, God is great, and we know Him not (or, 'and we know not'—how great He is), neither can the number of His years be searched out (is from everlasting, and therefore incomprehensible to us). For he maketh small the drops of rain (or, 'draweth up [by evaporation] the watery particles' from land and sea to be formed into rain): they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof (or, 'according to His vapour'—the quantity of vapour thus collected by Him; or, 'they fine [or filter] the rain from His vapour; or, 'instead of His mist,' alluding to Gen. ii. 5, 6), which the clouds do drop and distil (instead of pouring them down in destructive and overwhelming floods) upon man abundantly. Also, can any understand (or, does any consider) the spreadings of the clouds (either as to mode or measure), or the noise of His tabernacle (the thunder-crash that proceeds from the clouds, which form His pavilion, Ps. xviii. 11)? Behold, He spreadeth His light (or lightning) upon it

(or, 'over Himself,' Ps. civ. 2), and covereth the bottom (*Marg.*, 'the roots') of the sea (namely, with the light or lightning which penetrates the ocean's depths, or with the dense cloud spread over its surface; or, 'he covereth Himself with the bottom of the sea, *i.e.*, with the waters exhaled from it, and formed into clouds). For by them (the clouds, or these operations in the atmosphere) judgeth He the people (either in the bestowment of benefits or the infliction of chastisement); He giveth meat in abundance (by imparting fertility to the earth). With clouds He covereth the light (or the sun, the great reservoir and source of light to the earth, its opaque body being surrounded with a luminous atmosphere; or, 'He covereth both His hands with lightning'); and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt (or, 'commandeth concerning it—the lightning—in its striking,' or as to where it shall strike). The noise thereof sheweth concerning it (or, 'His thunder declares concerning Him,—His presence, power, and majesty), the cattle also concerning the vapour" (or concerning Him as He ascends [in the storm]; or, "a magazine of wrath against iniquity").

The whole paragraph sublime, but, on that account, obscure and difficult.—Contains a highly poetical description of a gathering thunder-storm, probably the storm-cloud out of which the Almighty was about to speak, and which was already making its appearance and giving forth its pealing thunder. From the whole, observe—

1. God in Himself infinitely above our comprehension, but discernible in His works of creation and providence.

2. Elihu's first illustration of God's power and wisdom drawn from Meteorology. God seen in objects and operations the most minute as well as the most majestic. The phenomenon of rain one of the most interesting evidences of His being and perfections. The atmosphere the Divine laboratory for the irrigation and fructifying of the earth. To fill the cloudy reservoirs with water exhaled from the land and sea, and then to form the contents into rain, and send it down in refreshing and fertilizing showers,—a process as interesting and wonderful as it is beneficial and little regarded. The whole operation carried on by the Divine Ruler according to laws of His own establishment. The process no less His own, and no less requiring His hand and direction, that it is carried on according to established laws.

3. The formation and descent of rain generally understood by the scientific, though much of the process still remains a mystery. "Can any understand [fully] the spreadings of the clouds?" The operation intended, like all other works of God in nature, to engage the attention and employ the study of His intelligent creatures. Engaged the thoughts of devout men in Job's day, when natural processes were much less understood than at present. Not considered, because so common. "Doth any consider the spreadings of the clouds?"

4. All nature a magazine of means prepared by the Almighty, to be employed by Him, either in judgment or in mercy. His goodness exhibited in the copious or softly falling shower; his terrible majesty and awful displeasure against sin, in the forked lightning and crashing thunder. Even the irrational creatures gladdened by the one, but alarmed and terrified by the other. All the elements of nature under the Almighty's control. The lightning-flash or thunderbolt has its commission from the Creator. "He commandeth concerning it where it shall strike." Alexis, the friend of Luther, is struck dead by a flash of lightning, while Luther himself, close by his side, remains unhurt.

5. The voice of Nature as well as of Revelation, that the Almighty is present in the thunder-storm. "The noise thereof showeth concerning him." God no less in the thunder because its reverberation is according to natural and tolerably understood laws. The report of a musket no less dependent on the hand that draws the trigger, that it is produced by the same laws. Every reason why the thunder-cloud should be designed and employed by its Divine Author, among other purposes, as his celestial artillery against His impenitent and rebellious adversaries (ch. xxviii. 22, 23).

6. Unspeakably blessed to have the Almighty for our Father and friend; terrible beyond conception, to have Him for our foe.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ELIHU'S FOURTH SPEECH CONTINUED.

Elihu continues his discourse, apparently in the midst of loud thunder-claps, suddenly issuing from the storm-cloud out of which the Almighty was about to speak, and which had already been seen gathering. The scene sublime and terrific. Elihu sensibly affected by it. (Verse 1)—"At this (the thunder he had just spoken of, ch. xxxvi 33), and which was

now heard) my heart trembleth (beats with awe) and is moved (or leaps) out of his place." Awe, a natural effect of loud reverberating thunder, even when its cause is better understood than it was in the days of Elihu. Pealing thunder intended as a display of God's solemn majesty as Ruler and Judge of mankind. Hence, accompanied the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 16). Only a consciousness of having the Almighty for our Father and friend through Jesus Christ, can or ought to give assurance and composure amid the cracking thunder and flashing of the storm.

1. Elihu calls Job's attention to the thunder-storm. Verses 2—5.—"Hear attentively the noise of His voice (in the thunder), and the sound that goeth out of His mouth. He directeth it (the thunder, or the flash that precedes it) under the whole heaven (or, 'under the whole heaven is its darting), and His lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it (*i.e.*, the flash) a voice goeth; He thundereth with the voice of His excellency, and He will not stay (or delay) them (the lightning, or other accompaniments of the thunder) when his voice is heard (or, "one cannot track them, though His voice hath been heard"). God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend." The magnificence and terror of a thunder-storm similarly described by the Psalmist: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters," &c. (Ps. xxix. 3, 10). Also, but with less sublimity, by the Poet of the Seasons:—

"'Tis listening fear, and dumb amazement all,
When to the startled eye, the sudden flame
Appears far South, eruptive through the cloud;
And following slower, in explosion vast,
The thunder raises his tremendous voice.
At first heard solemn, o'er the verge of Heaven,
The tempest growls; but as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the world,
The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more
The noise astounds: till overhead a sheet
Of lurid flame discloses wide; then shuts
And opens wider; shuts, and opens still
Expansive, wrapping ether in a blaze.
Follows the loosened aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling; peal on peal
Crush'd horrible, convulsing heaven and earth."

Observe—

1. *The terrors of a thunder-storm to be viewed as manifestations of the Almighty.* The thunder, however caused, truth and piety regard as "the noise of His voice." "God thundereth marvellously." The teaching of universal consciousness as well as of the Bible. No reason why the Almighty should not have witnesses, in His own universe, to His terribleness as well as to His tenderness. God no less in the thunder-storm, because we are allowed to understand a little of the way in which, and the laws by which, He is pleased, ordinarily, to produce it.

2. *Those sublimities in nature to be attentively regarded by us.* "Hear attentively the noise of His voice." The thunder-peal to be listened to as proclaiming—(1) The presence of God in the Universe; (2) His power and majesty; (3) The terribleness of His displeasure; (4) The vengeance awaiting the impenitent. Fitted and intended, among other things, to arouse the sinner to a sense of his guilt and danger. God's voice calling him to secure, in time, a place of refuge for his soul in Christ—"the covert from the tempest" (Is. xxxii 2). "This voice came for *your* sakes" (John xii. 30).

3. *The elements of nature all under God's control.* "He directeth it under the whole heaven."

4. *The omnipresence of God suggested by the velocity and reach of the lightning-flash.* "His lightning [is] to the ends of the earth." The passage of the electric fluid over thousands of miles instantaneous. Hence its wonderful and now extensive employment in telegraphy.

5. *God's operations in the atmosphere, as elsewhere, marvellous, and even still full of mystery.* "God thundereth marvellously: great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend." The thunder marvellous—(1) In its production; (2) In its terribleness; (3) In its effects. The nature of that which produces the thunder, and to which we give the name "electricity," still a mystery. Philosophers uncertain as to whether it is a fluid or a force, matter or a mere affection in matter. The latter now regarded as the more probable opinion, though for convenience, electricity is still spoken of as a fluid. Like heat, it appears to pervade all material substances, existing in each in a certain ordinary proportion, then imperceptible to the senses. Bodies capable of being overcharged with it, or made to have more than their ordinary proportion, and then of discharging the excess into some neighbouring body, so as thus to regain their usual condition. Its discharge or passage from one body to another, accompanied with a shock and a spark, or flash of light. The shock produced by electricity, artificially collected, able to throw down the strongest ox; and the heat produced by the spark or flash, able to melt the hardest metals. Lightning, the flash accompanying the passage of the fluid from a surcharged cloud either to another cloud or to the ground, its

general reservoir. The excess of electricity collected in a cloud during the heat of Summer, sometimes immense. Hence the terrible effects often attending its discharge. Thunder the sound produced by the explosion. Such explosions ordinarily made to serve a beneficent purpose, by restoring the air to a healthy condition. Capable, however, under the Divine direction, of serving other ends. All nature but the Almighty's instrument—

"A capacious reservoir of means,
Framed for His use and ready at His will."

Man acquainted, in some measure, with what are the forces operating in natural phenomenon, and what are the effects they produce; but the nature of the forces themselves a mystery. How they come to exist, and how they act and produce their effects, a greater mystery still.

II. Describes other Divine operations in nature. Verses 6—13.—"For He saith to the snow, be (or fall) thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of His strength (*Marg.*, 'and to the shower of rain, and to the showers of rain of His strength;' or, 'to the heavy shower of rain, and to the heavy shower of His violent rains'). He sealeth up (by these vehement rains or by the cold of winter about to be described) the hand of every man (stopping his labour in the field (Pr. xx. 4); or 'He putteth His seal on the hand of every man,' as a door or bag is sealed so as not to be opened but by the authority of Him who sealed it); that all men may know His work (or agency; or, 'that all men whom he hath made may know'—that is, the effect of His power as operating in nature, and their dependence upon Him). Then (at the time of these rains and cold of winter) the beasts go into dens and remain in their places. Out of the South cometh the whirlwind (from the sandy desert of Arabia, such as overthrew the house of Job's eldest son, ch. i. 19; Zech. ix. 14; Is. xxi. 1); and cold out of the north (or "from the scatterers;' *Marg.*, 'the scattering wind,' the north wind, which disperses the clouds and driveth away rain, Prov. xxv. 23). By the breath of God is frost given (or, 'ice congealeth'), and the breadth of the waters is straitened (or, 'the expanded waters are made solid,' namely, by being congealed). Also by watering (or 'in irrigating,' *i.e.*, the earth), He wearieth the thick cloud (by causing it to move from place to place; or 'He burdeneth' it, *i.e.*, with moisture; or, 'He presseth it,' in order to yield its contents, like a water-skin, which is pressed in order to empty it; otherwise, 'the brightness dispelleth the thick cloud'): He scattereth His bright cloud (*Marg.* "the cloud of His light," the cloud on which He causes the light of His sun to shine; or, 'His light [or sun] scattereth the cloud'—cumulous or *stack* clouds being usually dispersed at noon; otherwise, 'the cloud of His lightning'—that from which the lightning issues). And it is turned round about by His counsel (or, 'it moves round in circuits by His guidance'—literally, 'by His steerings'): that they may do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth (over the whole habitable globe). He causeth it (*i.e.*, the cloud with its watery contents) to come (*Heb.*, 'to find,' *i.e.*, its place or object), whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy" (or, "whether it be for a rod or tribe, or for His land or earth, viz., to fructify it,—verily [it is] for mercy;" or, "whether for correction to His land, or for mercy"). The last verse, as the text stands at present, obscure in the connection of its different clauses, while the general sense is sufficiently obvious. On the whole section, observe—

1. *All nature, with its various operations and phenomena, under God's direction and subject to His will.* (1) *Snow.* "He saith to the snow, be thou, and snow and vapour as well as stormy wind fulfil His word (Ps. cxlviii. 8). "He giveth snow like wool" (Ps. cxlvii. 16). Snow and hail reserved by Him against the time of trouble (ch. xxxviii. 22, 23). The snow no less the Almighty's servant, because we happen to know that when the condensed moisture in the atmosphere is congealed by the temperature being reduced below the freezing point, its particles descend in the form of snow. Serves a beneficial purpose in regard to the earth, in contributing to its irrigation, and especially in keeping it at a moderate degree of cold, and so protecting the germs of vegetation from the effects of frost. Made to serve other purposes of a providential, and sometimes of a judicial nature. Snow remarkable for the beautiful and variously-shaped crystals of which it is composed. (2) *Rain*—"Likewise to the small rain," &c. The rain-cloud parts with its contents only when God commands it, and *as* He commands, whether in the soft gentle shower or in the drenching down-pour that floods the fields and obstructs the labours of the husbandman. Every cloud does not necessarily descend in rain. If the cloud happens to be made warmer, either by the sun or by a current of dry warm air mixing with it, the watery particles are again dissolved into invisible vapour. Although we can explain the circumstances under which clouds are formed, 'there is a difficulty in understanding how the minute particles of water, of which they

are composed, are upheld so long in the air as we often see them, without any tendency, apparently, to descend. It is only, as would appear, when some unknown cause brings several of the particles together, so as to form drops of some size, that they begin to fall; and then, in their descent, they meet more and more particles, and thus become larger as they approach the ground.—*Chambers' Introduction to the Sciences.* (3) *Heat* and *Cold.* "Out of the south cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the North." The waters poetically said to be congealed by the breath of His mouth. Heat and cold continued to the earth according to His promise made after the flood. Their degree in any particular part of the earth's surface dependent on the situation of that part in relation to the sun, so as to receive its rays more or less directly or obliquely. The cold most intense and continued at the poles, as from the obliquity of the earth's axis they receive so little of the solar rays. The heat greatest about the equator, for the opposite reason. The air there, becoming rarefied by the heat, ascends, from its greater lightness, to occupy higher regions, while the cold air from about the poles rushes in to fill its place. Intermediate places rendered colder by the cold air thus passing over them. Frost and ice no less from God, that we know that when the heat of the atmospheric air falls below a certain point, hence called the *freezing point*, water begins to freeze and is changed into ice. (4) *Clouds.*—Here said to be "turned round, or in circuits, by His counsels," or literally, His steerings.' God the almighty and omniscient pilot of the universe, whose hand is ever on the helm, and who steers those mighty vessels with their watery contents, according to His will. Every motion of the clouds directed by Him and made to serve the purpose which He designs. Each little speck of light fleecy cloud, as well as the huge heavy-leaden *stack*, observed by His omniscient eye, and guided by His almighty hand. The clouds among the most important ministers of Divine providence in nature. No less so because we know that they are formed by a portion of air, saturated with vapour, having its temperature by any cause reduced, and so having its invisible changed into visible vapour.

2. *The purposes for which God employs the agencies of nature such as to serve His moral government of the world.* "Whether for correction," &c. These purposes always beneficent, or "for mercy," in the end, but sometimes in the way of correction, or a "rod." God's procedure towards mankind both judgment and mercy. Judgment His strange act; mercy His delight. "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James ii. 13). Yet judgment and correction necessary in a world of sin. The clouds ordinarily discharge their contents for the irrigation of the earth; but occasionally also for the destruction of person and property, man and beast. The ancient deluge, and inundations not unfrequent in our own time, examples of what ordinarily serves a beneficent purpose being employed also in a way entailing serious suffering and loss. Such corrections necessary and important—(1) As a testimony to Divine justice; (2) As proofs of the power of God to punish transgression; (3) As warnings against a course of sin. Punishment and its instruments no less necessary and proper in the Divine than in a human government. Yet, even in such cases, mercy remembered in wrath, and good to mankind educed. As in earthly governments, the inflicting of punishment one means of promoting the general good. Yet, in the Divine administration such corrections not always indicative of special demerit on the part of the sufferer. Sent for the trial and purification of the good, as well as for the chastisement and punishment of the bad.

III. Elihu calls Job's special attention to the works of God as seen in creation and providence. Verse 14.—"Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." The object of this summons, Job's humiliation and the silencing of his murmurs against God's procedure, from the consideration both of his ignorance and impotence. Verses 15—18.—"Dost thou know when God disposed them (or 'put His hand to them;' or, 'gave command concerning them,' in allusion to Gen. i. 3, &c.; or, 'imposed laws upon them,' in order to their preservation and the accomplishment of the end for which He created them), and caused the light of His cloud (the light that should illuminate His cloud, referring to the original command: 'Let there be light;' or, 'made the lightning of His cloud to shine,' as it was probably now flashing from the storm-cloud in their view). Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds (the manner in which they are poised and suspended in the air—probably another allusion to the creation, in reference to the waters above and below the firmament, Gen. i. 7), the wondrous works of Him Who is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm (felt to be too warm by the greatly increased temperature of summer), when He quieteth the earth by the south wind (tranquillizing the atmosphere, and causing the piercing north winds to cease)? Hast thou with Him (as His associate and companion in the work of creation—like the Divine Person designated Wisdom in Prov.

23—31) spread out the sky (or firmament, Gen. i. 7) which is strong (as supporting in it the heavenly bodies) and as a molten looking-glass" (or mirror—those in the East being usually of polished metal, either brass or steel—the sky at different times resembling the one or the other, as the yellow or blue predominates). Observe—

1. *Serious attention to be given to the works of God around us.* "Hearken unto this, O Job," &c. Those works in themselves marvellous displays of power and wisdom. Every department of creation teems with evidences of Divine skill and Almighty power. The works of God in nature, both on the earth and above it, a study as interesting as it is profitable. Such study, according to opportunities afforded, a duty we owe to God as well as to ourselves.

2. *Much in the commonest phenomena of nature we are unable even still to understand.* Among these is *heat.* "Knowest thou how thy garments are warm when He quieteth the earth by the south wind?" Heat both a sensation and the cause producing it. As a cause of the sensation, its exact nature not known. Like electricity, pervades all the material world; but whether a thin and subtle fluid, or only a property or affection of matter—motion of some kind among the component atoms of bodies, philosophers not agreed, though now generally inclining to the latter opinion. Mystery still connected with its operation as well as its nature. Sometimes a great deal of it enters a body and disappears, or produces no apparent effect, the body feeling no hotter to the touch, nor shown to be any hotter by the thermometer. Thus a great deal of heat required to melt a piece of ice, yet the water from the ice feels as cold as the ice itself and affects the thermometer in the same way, the heat not having warmed the ice, but only changed it into a liquid state. The alternation of heat and cold, summer and winter, now known to be occasioned by a remarkable provision on the part of the Creator—the obliquity of the earth's axis in its revolution round the sun, that axis being twenty-three and a half degrees out of the perpendicular.

3. *Creation intended as a school for man's instruction.* "Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." Some of man's most useful lessons to be learned in the school of nature. These lessons both in reference to God and ourselves. God's greatness and our own littleness never more realized than in the intelligent contemplation of the arrangements in nature in relation to the earth, and of the mechanism of the heavens, of which the earth forms a part. Of God's work in creation we understand but little: still less of His secret purposes and providential procedure; least of all, of Himself. The origin of the universe, except as God reveals it, entirely hidden from our knowledge. Science, of itself, able to teach nothing as to the fact of creation, or of the first great cause, except that there is one—an intelligence infinite in power and wisdom. The distance of the time when God first "disposed," or put His Almighty hand to the work, far beyond man's conception, millions of years being revealed in the earth's strata as antecedent to man's existence.

IV. Elihu ironically reproves Job's Presumption. Verse 19.—"Teach us what we shall say unto Him (as you are so much wiser than we are, and are able to enter into controversy with the Almighty); for we [for our part] cannot order speech (so as to argue with Him) by reason of darkness (in ourselves generally, and in relation to God's purposes and procedure in particular). Shall it be told Him that I speak (—be declared as by a messenger sent to Him that I will speak and debate the matter with Him)? if a man speak (attempt so to debate with the Almighty), surely he shall be swallowed up (confounded and overwhelmed by the Divine Majesty). And now (at the very time Elihu was speaking—either the storm-cloud then hiding the sun from view, and obscuring the sky, or a rising wind having cleared away the clouds and revealed the sun in his effulgence; or speaking figuratively—now in this present life, or in this present time of trouble in which Job then was,) men see not the bright light (or the sun shining brightly) which is in the clouds (or, men cannot look upon the light, or the sun, as it shines brightly in the sky); but the wind passeth and cleanseth them" (*i.e.*, the clouds, thus revealing the sun which before had been hidden by them; or, "after the wind has passed and cleansed it," *i.e.*, the sky). Observe—

1. *Man's duty to cherish becoming views of his creature-unworthiness, and to cultivate reverence in speaking of and to the Almighty.* "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. v. 2). The Lord's Prayer an example of the mode in which to address the Almighty. Teaches us to go to God as our Father, yet with deep reverence and humility. Contains only seven petitions, the three first having relation to God Himself, and each of them, with one exception, expressed in about half a dozen words. In the New Testament, God especially revealed as our Father through Christ; while through Him, as our Advocate with and our way to the Father, we enjoy the privilege of a free access to and filial fellow

ship with God not generally known to the patriarchs and Old Testament saints (Eph. iii. 12; Heb. iv. 16; xi. 40).

2. *External nature to be viewed as a symbol of spiritual and Divine things.* (1) In reference to God *Himself.* The brightness of the unclouded sun apparently intended by Elihu to be viewed as a symbol of the majesty and glory of God. God's dwelling in that light which no man can approach to (1 Tim. vi. 16). If men are unable to contemplate the material sun without being blinded by its dazzling effulgence, how much less the glory of the Almighty Himself! Yet our happiness to see God—in a manner even here, and more fully hereafter. For this end God reveals Himself in Christ. The splendour of the Divine glory softened in the Son of God by the veil of humanity. Christ's name, "Emmanuel—God with us." In Christ, who is also our Brother, we see the Father (John xiv. 9). His glory beheld even here, as that of the only begotten of the Father (John i. 14). Purity of heart, given us in Christ, necessary in order to see God (Matt. v. 8; 1 Cor. i. 2). (2) In reference to *our own experience.* Elihu's language in verse 21 suggestive of the

Life of Faith.

1. *The believer's experience on earth often resembling a clouded sky.* "*Now* men see not the bright light." The face of the sun often hidden by a thick cloud. Times when even believers cannot see the light of God's countenance, and when His dealings with them are dark and mysterious. At best, while here, we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly. God's face often apparently hidden from believers in time of trouble. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment" (Is. liv. 8). David's complaint: "Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble" (Ps. x. 1). Job's case at present. A dark and cloudy day with Abraham on his way to Mount Moriah; with Jacob, on the apparent loss of his three sons; with Joseph in the prison; with Moses in Midian; with David at Ziklag; with Jeremiah in the dungeon; with Jesus on the cross. Believers, as well as men in general, find themselves while on earth hedged in by mystery on every side. Clouds and darkness contingent to us as creatures—still more as sinful ones. "What I do thou knowest not *now.*"

2. *To the believer there is bright light behind the clouds.* "Now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds." The bright light *there,* though men see it not. The sun still in the heavens, though a cloud hide him from our view. Whatever clouds hide God from his sight or rest upon his path, a threefold light still shining to the believer. (1) God's unchanging *love* in Christ (Jer. xxxi. 3; John xiii. 1; Rom. viii. 38, 39); (2) God's everlasting *covenant* made with him in Christ, ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Is. liv. 10, lv. 3); (3) God's gracious *purpose* in Christ, to save him, and to make all things work together for his good (Rom. viii. 28—32; Eph. i. 3—14). The wheels of Divine Providence ever going straightforward to a believer's full salvation, however things may at times appear to himself. "Behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face,"—one of the truths intended to be taught by this very book.

3. *The time comes when the clouds are chased away.* "The wind passeth and cleanseth them." The light of God's countenance not always to be hidden to the believer. Cloud and mystery not always to rest upon his path. David's comfort in a time of darkness: "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance;" "the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime" (Ps. xlii. 5, 8). Micah's confidence: "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Mic. vii. 8). He will not always chide. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Is. liv. 7). "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John xiii. 7; xvi. 22). The cloud passed away from Abraham on Mount Moriah, and he rejoiced in the renewed assurance of God's gracious purposes concerning his seed; from Joseph, and he saw himself next to Pharaoh on the throne of Egypt, preserving much people, and among them his own father and brothers, alive; from Moses, and he found himself at the head of all Israel, leading them out of Egypt, and worshipping with them at the mount where God had appeared to him; from David, and he saw himself occupying the throne of Saul and made a blessing to the people. So the cloud ultimately passed away from Job, and he saw himself richer than ever, not only in possessions, but in the affection of his friends and esteem of all his neighbours. A day coming which shall clear away all obscurity, and solve every enigma both in the Book of Revelation and Providence. Hence the lesson—(1) of *humility* and *modesty* in judging both of God's word and works; (2) of *patience* and *resignation* to the Divine will: (3) of *faith,* so as to walk in comfort and hope even in the darkest dispensations.

V. Winding up of Elihu's speech. Verses 22—24.—"Fair weather (*Marg.*: 'gold;' *i.e.* golden splendour or effulgence—a bright or golden sky) cometh out of the north (or from the north wind which disperses the clouds, Prov. xxv. 23); with God is terrible majesty (of which that visible splendour is but a shadow). Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out (neither in His being nor His procedure); He is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice (whatever men may at any time think of His dealings): He will not afflict (or 'oppress,' though Job was ready at times to think so in reference to himself, or 'He will not answer' or 'give account' of His procedure to any of His creatures). Men do therefore fear Him (or 'let men therefore fear Him'—the conclusion of the whole matter, Eccl. xii. 13); he respecteth (or 'feareth') not any that are wise of heart" (as Job thinks himself to be; or "let each," or "shall not each" of the wise-hearted fear Him; otherwise,—"none of the wise-hearted seeth or comprehendeth Him"). Observe—

1. *The end of all true teaching, as of all revelation, that men may fear God.* Elihu concludes his speeches as the Royal Preacher his discourses: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,—Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. xii. 13). All consideration of God and His works, whether of creation or Providence, to conduct to the same conclusion. Everything in God and His works fitted to lead men to fear Him. That fear a holy reverence,—the fear of a loving child in reference to a worthy father; not that of a trembling slave in reference to a severe master. God's being and perfections,—His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,—such as to render Him the object at once of fear and love. A loving fear required by God from His intelligent creatures. The rational creature's whole duty summed up in such fear. Forgiving mercy intended to produce it (Ps. cxxx. 4). Such fear not the growth of fallen nature, but the production of Divine grace (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40). The object of Christ's redemption to deliver us from slavish fear and implant the filial (Luke i. 74; Rom. viii. 15; 1 John iv. 18; 1 Peter i. 17—20).

2. *God too glorious to be contemplated by fallen, and too great to be comprehended by finite, man.* A terrible majesty with God, only pictured by the dazzling brightness of the unclouded sun. Seraphims veil their faces with their wings as they stand before Him. Fallen men conscious of being unable to look on Him and live (Gen. xxxii. 30); Judges xiii. 22). Declared by God Himself (Ex. xxxiii. 20). Hence Peter's exclamation on beholding the traces of Christ's divinity (Luke v. 8). In Christ, however, God contemplated even by sinful men. Heaven in beholding the glory of God. Stephen's vision. Christ's prayer for His people. The glorified see God's face (Rev. xxii. 4). God not more to be *comprehended* than *contemplated*. His thoughts a great deep. Only the smallest portion of His works at all understood by men. The greatest among scientific men compared himself to a child gathering bubbles on the seashore, while the ocean of knowledge lay unexplored before him. The attempt to comprehend God compared by Augustine to that of a child scooping a hole in the sand, and attempting with its tiny shell to empty the sea into it. God to be *apprehended* for our own *comfort* and His glory by the humblest peasant that sits at the feet of Jesus, who reveals the Father; not, to be *comprehended* by the highest seraph that folds his wings before the throne. Heaven filled with adoring wonder (Rev. xv. 3, 4).

3. *The interests of His creatures safe in the hands of the Almighty.* "He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." In God is power to execute all His will, and defend all who trust in Him; judgment and justice, to make only a right use of that power. Justice His nature, and judgment His administration. "He will not afflict." In another sense He afflicts, but even then not willingly (Lam. iii. 33). He afflicts as a chastening; does *not* afflict as an oppression. "To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth, the Lord approveth not" (Lam. iii. 34). God may punish but not oppress. Has no pleasure in the sinner's death. Judgment His strange act, mercy His delight. Binds up the bruised reed instead of breaking it (Is. xlii. 3).

4. *Comfort to Job and every tried believer in Elihu's last words*: "He will not afflict," or oppress. How much less any of His own children! "Fair weather cometh out of the north." The tempest may howl, and the clouds lower, and the thunders roll; but after the storm comes a calm and serene sky. The wind shall chase away the clouds—albeit a north wind with its piercing cold. Troubles are to a believer but a passing storm. Weeping may endure for a night; joy cometh in the morning. We sow in tears; but in a little while we shall reap with joy.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JEHOVAH'S ADDRESS TO JOB.

Elihu had now said all he intended. Possibly interrupted by the storm which had been gathering during his speech. Out of the storm-cloud, from which already issued thunders and lightnings, the Almighty was now to speak. The grandeur and sublimity of the scene not to be surpassed. Its only counterpart at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 18).

I. The announcement of the Almighty's speech. Verse 1.—"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (or storm-cloud). Observe—

1. The *Speaker*. "The Lord"—Jehovah. A name (1) *Mysterious*; expressive of the mysterious attributes of Godhead—eternity, self-existence, unchangeableness, self-dependence—He Who was, is, and is to be. Equivalent to that given by God Himself at the burning bush: "I am," or "I am that I am." (2) *Gracious*; a covenant name. Assumed by God in relation to Israel as His chosen and covenant people—"Jehovah, the God of Israel." Indicates unchangeable faithfulness in the performance of His promises and covenant obligations. Especially revealed to Moses at the bush as expressive of the relationship to be established between God and Israel from that period. The pronunciation of the name lost to the Jews, together with their covenant relationship to the Almighty. Now known by them only as the name of four letters. "Adonai"—Lord or Master—substituted for it. The name as given in the text, probably indicative of the Israelitish authorship of the book, as well as in some degree of the period of its composition. The name applied in the Bible to three distinct persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here the Son intended as "The Word," or He by Whom the Godhead speaks and reveals Himself to man (John i. 1). Unspeakable condescension on the part of Jehovah to address Himself to fallen man in any other way than one of judgment.

2. The *speech*. "Answered." God's address to Job an "answer." Mercy implied in God's speaking to man at all. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past to the fathers," &c. (Heb. i. 1). Might have treated men as the fallen angels—with eternal silence. One of the greatest trials and griefs to the godly when God appears to be "silent to them" (Ps. xxviii. 1). Saul's great misery that God answered him no more (1 Sam. xxviii. 15). Especial mercy when God *answers* men. Implies felt need and desire on man's part—sense of darkness, perplexity, want. God *still* answers men—by His written word, His Spirit, the lips of His servants, His providence. Especial mercy when *God* answers men. Job's three friends, and then Elihu, had answered Job, but without effect. The answer from God Himself needed. "None teacheth like Him." "I am the Lord that teacheth thee to profit." He speaks and instructs "with a strong hand" (Is. viii. 11). His word with power. The proper posture of men in relation to God that of Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" or that of David: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. lxxxv. 8). God's answer to Job given according to his desire, yet not *such* as he expected. Intended not to vindicate Himself or His procedure, but to instruct and humble Job. Given to convince him of the sinfulness of his complaints and questionings, by showing him his own ignorance and littleness in contrast with Jehovah's omniscience and almightiness. Designed to show him his inability even to *judge* of His Maker's procedure, from his inability to explain the commonest operations in nature. The answer a prosecution of the argument of Elihu. Job apparently *silenced*, but not *convinced*, by Elihu's speeches. The address unequalled for majesty of sentiment and sublimity of language by any uninspired production either of ancient or modern times. The speech a daring flight for a poet, but sustained because *inspired*. The book of Job the sublimest poem in the world. "One of the grandest things ever written with pen—nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit."—*Carlyle*. This speech the sublimest part of the book.

3. The *party addressed*. "Job." Others present; possibly, however, without hearing, or at least understanding, what was spoken. Saul's companions on the way to Damascus saw the light, but "heard not the voice of Him that spake to him" (Acts xxii. 9). Yet, they "heard a voice, but saw no man"—hearing it without understanding its utterance (Acts ix. 7). A Divine voice, like thunder, spoke to Jesus in the presence of the people, understood by Him, but not by

them (John xii. 28, 29). Observe—(1) *Divine sovereignty.* The three friends in greater error than Job, yet Job only answered. Yet (2) sovereignty exercised in *justice and goodness.* Job alone desired an answer from God, and alone believed that such would be given. (3) *Divine mercy and kindness* in answering *Job.* His spirit at times all but, if not actually, rebellious, and his language petulant and irreverent—such as called for deep repentance. *God does not turn away from His sincere, though sinning, servants.* (4) *God's faithfulness to His people.* His answer a sharp *reproof* to Job. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." *God loves His people too well to suffer sin upon them.* Saints often dealt with in an apparently rougher manner than even sinners. (5) The *particularity* of God's dealing with men. Job singled out in this address, as if the only person present. So always when God speaks effectually. "Thou art the man." "Zacchæus, make haste and come down." The Good Shepherd "calleth His own sheep by their name."

4. The *place.* "Out of the whirlwind." The tempest raised for this special purpose. Perhaps an ordinary storm-cloud now produced in the providence of God to be employed as His pavilion whence to issue this address. Natural for a storm to be chosen for such a purpose. Perhaps a similar storm employed in the giving of the law (Exod. xix 16). All nature under God's control, and ready at His call. The lightnings His servants, saying: Here we are (verse 35). A storm the symbol of judgment and the expression of power. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost like the sound of "a rushing mighty wind" (Acts ii. 2). Divine interposition on behalf of David and David's Lord represented as connected with a storm of wind and hail, thundering and lightning (Ps. xviii. 9—14). Clouds, fire, and tempest accompany the Judge's descent at the last day (Ps. l. 3; Dan. vii. 10; 2 Thess. i. 8; Rev. i. 7). The whirlwind, or storm-cloud, now employed as expressive of—(1) The majesty of the Speaker; (2) The weightiness of the matter; (3) The power of the Almighty to accomplish His purposes, whether of mercy or judgment; (4) The terribleness of His displeasure. Intended (1) To awaken more solemn attention; (2) To convey a deeper impression of the power and majesty of God; (3) To contribute to the object of the speech, Job's conviction and humiliation. Suitable as—(1) Accompanying a Divine reproof; 2) On an occasion in which the power, justice, and providence of God had appeared to be called in question. The present case compared and contrasted with God's voice to Elijah in the wilderness—a wind, earthquake, and fire, yet the Lord in none of them, but in "a still, small voice" which followed (1 Kings xix. 11, 12). Observe—(1) *All nature used as God's instruments.* The storm-cloud employed as His pavilion, and the whirlwind as His car (Ps. xviii. 10, 11). (2) *Terrible to have such a Being for our enemy; blessed to have Him for our friend.* "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). (3) *God occasionally speaks to His people out of a storm.* Storms in the experience of believers; but the Lord is in the storm, and speaks out of it. An ancient version of the text reads: "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind of grief." A Father's voice in every tempest of trouble that overtakes a believer. The voice, as in Job's case, may be one of *reproof,* but is, at the same time, one of *love.* "It is I; be not afraid." "I will allure her into the wilderness, and I will speak comfortably unto her" (*Marg.*: "to her heart"). What appears only to betoken wrath, and to threaten destruction, made to believers to be a channel of mercy. In Job's case the storm-cloud prepared the way for the sunshine that followed. Blessed for God to speak to us, though out of a whirlwind. A storm of any kind a blessing, if God speaks to us out of it. If God only speak to us, we may well leave the mode of His doing so to Himself. The same loving Father and faithful covenant-God, whether He speak in a whirlwind, an earthquake, a fire, or a "still, small voice."

II. The Reproof. Verse 2.—"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" The question expressive of wonder and reprehension. "Who is this?" Who so bold, foolish, and presumptuous? The wisest and best incompetent to sit in judgment on the Divine procedure. The ground of God's reproof—"that darkens counsel by words without knowledge." Job not reproved for his previous life, but his present language. His language blamed not for its impiety, but its presumption and ignorance. Job "darkened counsel"—(1) By casting reflections on the Divine procedure, and so obscuring its brightness; (2) Making that which is mysterious to us still darker by cavils and short-sighted reasonings. Great force in the expression. Man, by his carnal reasoning, and still more by his complaining, instead of clearing up what is dark in the Divine procedure, only makes it darker. Observe—

1. *All God's ways are "counsel."* "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom." Nothing in God's dealings but what is the result of an infinite wisdom and eternal

forethought. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Everything both actual and possible taken into view by Him at one glance. His perfections enable Him not only to *know*, but to *choose* and accomplish, what is best. Nothing unforeseen or unprovided for. A sparrow's fall not without God. His purposes called His "counsel," because the result of wisdom and forethought (Ps. xxxiii. 11; Prov. xix. 21; Is. xxviii. 29; Acts ii. 23). God's grace in Christ abundant towards us, but "in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. i. 8). Every event in Providence and every trouble in a believer's experience, the filling up of a wise and well-calculated plan, without any prejudice to man's freedom or lessening of his responsibility.

2. *Man, by reasoning about, and cavilling against, God's dealings, only darkens the subject.* Our duty in reference to God's procedure not to reason and question, but to submit and adore. The more that man, in his own carnal wisdom, reasons about God and His providence, the greater His perplexity and confusion. To teach man's duty in reference to the Divine procedure, the object of the Almighty's present address. Its meaning, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. xlvi. 10).

3. *Human reasonings in regard to God and his dealings, apart from revelation, only "words without knowledge."* Such reasonings the mere thoughts and prattle of children in regard to the administration of a kingdom. God and His ways known only as He is pleased to reveal them. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Our knowledge, while on earth, at best but "in part"—fragmentary and piecemeal. God's providential dealings seen hereafter as a transparent sea of glass (Rev. xv. 2).

4. *All cavils and complaints against God's dealings in providence only the result of ignorance*—"words without knowledge."

III. The Challenge. Verse 3.—"Gird up now thy loins like a man (a valiant man, ready to enter on a contest, as Job had wished to do with the Almighty (ch. xiii. 22),—spoken in irony and humbling reproof); for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." Job's desire now granted, but not in the way he expected. God "calls" (ch. xiii. 22), but not to enter into a suit with Job in regard to his past life. The questions put, not as to what he has done, but what he knows and is able to do. The object of them to shew his folly and presumption in questioning his Maker's dealings. His knowledge shown to be ignorance, and his power perfect weakness. These contrasted with the wisdom and power of God, as seen—(1) In His work of creation; (2) In His work of providence. A series of questions proposed which follow each other like claps of thunder in the ear of the silenced patriarch. The challenge intended to show Job his utter incapacity to sit in judgment on God's procedure, and his arrogance in arraigning it. Job reminded by it that he is but of yesterday and knows nothing, and that he is unable to put a finger to the commonest processes of nature, either in the inanimate or animate world; while all has been seen, planned, and executed ages before he was born, and is continually, every moment, and in all places, executed still by Him who is both Creator and Governor of the universe. The questions such as to teach us true Christian wisdom—*silence and submission in the presence of God's most mysterious and painful providences.* Observe—

1. *Man's proper character and behaviour in relation to God's procedure, rather that of a child than of a "man."* The things of God hidden from the wise and prudent, but "revealed unto babes." Our duty and interest in relation to God's dealings, to behave ourselves like "a weaned child" (Ps. cxxxi. 2). "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men" (1 Cor. xiv. 20).

2. *In the presence of God, man's posture to be rather that of a child than of a "man."* In relation to our duty as Christians in the world, we are to "quit ourselves like men and be strong," but in the presence of God to take the place of children. When Jeremiah took the place of a child, God made him "an iron pillar and a brazen wall against the whole land" (Jer. i. 6, 18). The "worm Jacob" taken by God and employed as a "new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth, to thrash the nations" (Is. xli. 15).

3. *Man's duty to "gird up his loins" in order to work for God, not to debate with Him.* The mightiest but a sorry match for his Maker. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe unto him that striveth with his Maker" (Is. xlv. 9). "Who will set the thorns and briars against me in battle." Man's glory and honour, to contend *for* God; his disgrace and ruin, to contend *with* Him.

IV. The Questioning. Verses 4—41).—Embraces a wide field both in nature and Providence. As suitable and appropriate to humble man's pride in the present age of advanced science, as in the days of the patriarch. The questions have relation to—

1. *Job's antiquity and God's creation of the world.* Verses 3—7.—"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if (or 'since'—ironically) thou hast understanding. Who hath laid

the measures (assigned the dimensions and proportions) thereof, if (or since) thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it (the measuring line, in order to regulate its form and dimensions for beauty and use)? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ('its bases sunk')? or who laid the corner-stone thereof (rendering the fabric so firm as not to fall to pieces); When the morning stars (angels, figuratively so called from their splendour and early place in creation; or perhaps, literal stars, by personification) sang together (like the Priests and Levites at the foundation and finishing of the second Temple (Ezra iii. 10, 11; Zech. iv. 7), and all the sons of God (angels, so called from their Divine origin and resemblance) shouted for joy?" (participating with their Maker's joy in the perfection of the work and the prospects connected with it (Exod. xxxi. 17; Ps. civ. 31; Prov. viii. 31).

Observe—(1) *Man incapacitated from his very creaturehood, and especially his comparatively recent creation, for forming a judgment apart from revelation, concerning God's purposes and procedure.* The plan of the world's government formed in connection with the creation of it. To form an unaided judgment of the former, man should have been present at the latter. (2) *Every thing connected with the*

Formation of the Earth,

indicative of infinite wisdom and power, but lying beyond man's present knowledge. Science confessedly ignorant of such a thing as creation, and of the origin of the universe. The rocks probably intended here as the "foundations" of the earth. These ascertained to descend several miles below the surface. The earth's crust known to the depth of eight or ten miles. Supposed, from calculation, to extend nearly twenty miles lower. The globe itself believed to have been at the beginning a mass of metal resembling quicksilver, and to have been launched into space in a state of extreme heat—being first, by a natural process, covered with rust and then with water. The first really solid ground believed to have been *granite*—a hard, fire-baked substance, prepared in the interior furnace of the globe for the pavement of the water-covered earth, and pressed, while in a soft state, by some enormous weight occasioned by the hot and burning metals that rested over it. Its hard stony masses afterwards, by some mighty agency, forced up to the surface; some portions being left under the waters, while others were driven up through them, and formed mountains and hills. The granite subsequently covered by various earths placed on it by the Creator, so as to form the earth's crust. The granite itself formed out of *eight* of the sixty materials found in the crust of the globe, these forming three distinct bodies (quartz, mica, and feldspar), each so constituted as to answer the purposes for which it was required, viz. —to form by its union with the other substances a solid pavement, suitable to go round the globe. Streams of electricity supposed to have accompanied the mighty forces that lifted the granite, in mountain piles, up through the waters, causing it to crack and rend into four-sided blocks. The granite thus uplifted at various periods of the world's existence, and made the great storehouse whence mud, sand, and fragments have been supplied for the building up of the greater number of our rocks; its blocks grinding one against another, and its mountain surfaces being broken and crumbled into dust by the united action of frost, wind, and rain. The particles rolling down the rocky steeps, and falling into innumerable rills trickling down the mountain's side, believed to have been washed by them into the valleys below, to meet the river-floods; where they were ground and smoothed, through constant friction, into masses of sand, mud, and rubble, swept into the ocean, and driven still onwards by tides and currents, till they gradually sank down and formed flat beds or strata. Some of these strata thousands of feet in depth. Hardened into rock by the pressure of new beds over them, by the effects of heat, and by dissolved iron or lime percolating in water through the masses. Some of the loosened particles of granite falling into the surrounding waters, believed to have been spread in beds over the hot ocean floors, or piled up in hollow places between the sea-mountains; and having been there baked by the hot granite, to have formed what are called crystalline rocks of gneiss and mica slate, sometimes two miles in depth; while clay slate, several hundred feet in thickness, was further made from the same materials, and divided into its thin plates by the electric fluid having been sent through the mass of the slate mud. The earth thus said in Scripture to have been "founded upon the seas and established upon the floods" (Ps. xxiv. 2); an ocean of water having been the original covering of the globe, before the rocks were heaved up through its waters. In another sense, the earth without foundations, being hung "upon nothing" (ch. xxvi. 7), and kept in its place while moving round the sun, by the two opposite centripetal and centrifugal forces.

(3) *The formation of the earth and its preparation as a habitation for man, especially when viewed in connection with its future*

history, a work of such glory and excellence as to call forth the joyful songs of angelic spectators. The earth itself, before sin defaced it, and as it appeared on the day on which God rested from His work, a scene of matchless beauty. That must have been beautiful, and worthy of the songs of angels, which the Divine Creator himself pronounced "very good." From that earth, as probably in some degree made known at the time of its formation, angels themselves were to derive a large accession both to their knowledge and their joy (Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12; Luke ii. 10—14; Rev. v. 12). (4) *Angels of inconceivable antiquity.* Millions of ages since the foundations of the earth were laid in its granite rocks. Angels apparently spectators during the laying of those foundations as well as through the whole process of the earth's formation. Hence probably called "morning stars." God's elder children. Full of knowledge as the elder-born of creation. Happy they are who made to resemble them in character and to spend eternity in their society! (5) *That in God's works of creation on earth sufficient to occupy the songs of the highest created Intelligences.* How glorious then those works, and how worthy of our contemplation and praise! A lesson here intended for Job. The angels' joyful adoration exhibited for his and our imitation. God's works, whether of creation or providence, to be commended, not complained against nor cavilled at. A privilege to be the inhabitants of a world whose formation awakened the joyful songs of angels. If angels rejoiced and sung on account of its formation, how much more may we, if savingly interested in the redemption-work of Him by whom and for whom all things were made, and who, to save us, took our nature and became our elder Brother!

2. *The sea and its barriers of sand and rock.* Verse 8—11.—"Or who shut up the sea (probably the waters that covered the earth at the beginning of the Mosaic creation, Gen. i. 2) with doors, when it brake forth (perhaps from an underground abyss), as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof (perhaps the darkness or thick vapour that was 'upon the face of the deep,' Gen. i. 2), and thick darkness a swaddling band for it (the waters viewed as a new-born infant); and brake up for it my decreed place (or, 'appointed my decree over it'), and set bars and doors (in the sand and rocks, while preparing the sea and dry land, Gen. i. 9); and said: Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

The operations here referred to, in accordance with the account of the creation given in the book of Genesis. Darkness and dense vapour enveloping the globe and its watery surface, the natural effect of the earth's internal heat acting upon the waters that covered it. According to geologists, the fiercest heat of the glowing globe probably checked from ascending into the air through the rusty covering spread over it; the change in temperature thus causing the steaming vapours in the atmosphere to fall down upon that covering in the shape of water, and so to surround the whole of the globe with one general primeval ocean. The "doors," or sandy and rocky barriers of the ocean afterwards formed, the result of upheavals and subsidencies at subsequent and different periods. The whole process the work of a wisdom and power surpassing our conception, and one far beyond the knowledge and comprehension of men. Observe—

The restraint imposed upon the rolling and dashing waves of ocean by a barrier of sand and rocks, the emblem of the restraint put upon the pride and rebellion of intelligent creatures. Fallen *angels* restrained within the bounds assigned them by the Almighty. 'Reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). Their liberty to tempt and do mischief only such as He is pleased to allow. Such restraining power frequently exhibited by the Saviour when on earth. In their endeavours to crush the Church, allowed to proceed so far and no farther. So with wicked *men* and the Church's human adversaries. Herod "stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church." Had already slain one apostle and was intent on the murder of another, when he is smitten by an invisible hand and miserably dies (Acts xii. 1, &c.). The reformation under Luther took place immediately after the Pope and his adherents, at the Lateran Council in 1514, rejoiced that not a single voice was raised against his authority throughout the whole world. The power of the Moslems arrested at Tours by Charles Martel in 1492, when it threatened to subdue the whole of Europe, as it had already done a large portion of it. The Invincible Armada, by which Philip II. of Spain expected to crush the Reformation in England, with its troops drawn from all quarters, after three years of preparation, carrying, as it did, the instruments of torture by which the heretics of England were to pay the price of their desertion from Rome, was destroyed almost without hand when on the very eve of accomplishing its purpose. *Deus flavit, et dissipantur.* "God blew and they are scattered." "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The "gates of hell" may send forth its raging legions against the Church of Christ, but "shall not prevail against it." The interests

of the Church as a whole, and of every believer composing it, safe in the hands of such a God and Saviour.

3. *The vicissitude of day and night.* Verses 12—15.—"Hast thou commanded the morning (to succeed the night) since thy days (since thou wast born, or, because thou hast seen many days); and caused the day-spring to know his place (the exact time throughout the year when it should arise); that it might take hold of the ends of the earth (spreading its light from one end of the earth to the other—from the eastern to the western horizon), that the wicked might be shaken out of it (as no longer able to pursue their deeds of darkness after the morning light has risen)? It (the earth) is turned as clay to the seal (*Heb.*, 'as clay of the seal,' as the clay under the impression of the seal, exhibiting forms and appearances which were not visible upon it before); and they (the objects on the earth's surface) stand [forth] as a garment (a beautiful, parti-coloured, and variously-figured robe clothing the earth, which during the night was entirely unseen). And from the wicked their light is withholden (these being, as the result of their evil deeds, deprived of the light either by imprisonment or death), and the high arm (their mighty power, or the arm uplifted for deeds of violence,) shall be (or is) broken" (in consequence of the light exposing their deeds and leading to their detection and punishment, and from courts of justice being in those countries usually held in the morning). Observe—(1) *One of the most striking examples of Divine wisdom, power, and goodness, afforded in the succession of day and night.* The result of the earth's daily rotation on its axis in its annual revolution round the sun, and the inclination of that axis from the perpendicular. The return of light every morning a mercy demanding devout thankfulness, and calling for adoring consideration of the Divine wisdom and goodness; all the more as this has been going on ever since the creation of the world. (2) *Man's feebleness exhibited in connection with the return of each morning's light.* Man unable to promote or hinder, hasten or retard, its return by a single moment. (3) Among other beneficial objects accomplished by the return of morning light, is its subserviency to God's moral government of the world, in checking the commission of evil deeds which can only be perpetrated under the cover of night, and in leading to their detection and punishment. (4) As every morning throughout the year exhibits arresn to man's view the earth arrayed in its beautiful garments, our duty is thankfully to recognise the goodness of God in an arrangement which conduces so much to our comfort and enjoyment, as well as to our convenience.

4. *The depths of the ocean.* Verse 16.—"Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea (the 'fountains of the great deep,' Gen. vii. 11; or 'the entangled thickets' or jungle in the ocean beds)? or hast thou walked (as on dry land) in the search of the depth?" (penetrated and examined the depths of the ocean or its caverned recesses). Three facts connected with the ocean-depths exhibiting God's greatness and man's littleness. (1) *The unexplored vegetation found in the bottom of sea.* The bed of the ocean in many localities luxuriantly clothed with marine vegetation, to the extent of many hundred miles. These submarine forests and jungles thronged with living beings, while no eye of man rests on their hidden beauties. (2) *The great depth of water in some parts of the ocean.* Probable that, considering the greater extent of the ocean than of the land, the bed of the former descends to a depth considerably exceeding the highest mountains of the latter. In the North Atlantic, no bottom found in 1849 with a line of 34,200 feet, nearly equal to six and a half miles in length. In the South Atlantic, the depth reached, in 1853, of eight miles and three quarters. In these almost unfathomable depths, not a plant that vegetates, nor a creature that finds a home in those ocean-caves, but is open to God's omniscient eye, and is the object of his providential care. (3) *The existence of fountains in the bottom of the sea.* These fountains emit their streams of fresh water into the ocean from underground sources. In many places the water of the sea is fresher at great depths than at the surface, owing to the presence of such springs. A powerful jet of fresh water found in the Gulf of Spezzia, and others in the Persian Gulf and in the Bay of Xagua, south-east of Cuba.

5. *The earth's interior and the nether world of spirits.* Verse 17.—"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" Two ideas suggested in these interrogatories. (1) *The earth's interior hidden and unknown to men.* The place of departed spirits often represented as in the interior of the earth, probably from the body being buried beneath its surface (1 Sam. xxviii. 8—15). The earth's interior entirely unknown to man. Rocks of various kinds known to constitute its crust to the depth of eight or ten miles. This crust supposed to extend perhaps fifteen miles further—an extent, however, of which nothing is known. The space beyond probably an immense cavern of subterranean fire, heating the lower parts of the crust, and occasioning hot springs and volcanoes, which

from time to time force up flames, lava, and red-hot mud. (2) *The world of spirits unknown and unpenetrated by men while in the body.* Of that world nothing is certainly known except as revealed in the Word of God. Man unable to penetrate its hidden regions except by bursting the bars of his corporeal enclosure. Views of the abode of *happy* spirits sometimes vouchsafed to favoured men on earth, probably while in an ecstatic state (2 Cor. xii. 2—4; Rev. iv. 1—11; vii. 9—17). Persons miraculously restored to life unable to report their observation and experience in the spirit-world. Glimpses of heaven occasionally afforded to to believers, especially when already arrived at its confines. Human power or science unable to draw aside the veil that conceals the world of spirits from our view. Mysteries connected with the state of the dead not revealed. One thing certain;—a heaven of joy or a hell of woe awaits men after death, according as their character prepares them for one or the other. Fallen angels "reserved in chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day," with temporary liberty allowed, in the mean time to perhaps a part (Jude 6; Luke viii. 28—31).

6. *The earth's extent.* Verse 18.—"Hast thou perceived (as in one glance) the breadth of the earth? declare if (or since) thou knowest it all." The language adapted to the ideas then prevalent in regard to the earth. Its form and extent equally unknown in the days of the patriarch. The earth then thought to be a vast plain with inequalities on its surface, stretching to an unknown extent, and bounded on all sides by the ocean. More recent observation and study have ascertained, with sufficient accuracy, both the figure and the dimensions of the earth. In consequence however of its spherical figure, man's eye able to rest at any moment on but a small portion of its surface. The Eye of Omniscience every moment equally on every part of that surface, as well as on its secret depths.

7. *The origin and diffusion of light.* Verses 19—21, 24. "Where is the way [to] where [the] light dwelleth? and as for darkness (viewed as a substance, rather than as the absence of light), where is the place thereof (from whence it comes, or where it exactly begins)? that thou shouldst take it to (or 'seize it at') the bound thereof (where it begins and terminates), and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou (or 'thou knowest') it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? By what way is the light parted (diffusing itself over the earth every morning), which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?" (the solar heat causing the air to ascend while colder air rushes in to fill its place, thus causing the wind, especially the trade winds, which blow for months from east to west; or, "which the east wind scatters upon the earth,"—the light rising in the east).

Light

naturally an object of special attention to early sages. Its emanation from the sun and other heavenly bodies obvious. The subject, however, still a mysterious one. According to Genesis, light created before either sun or moon. These bodies merely reservoirs or reflectors of light. The question still arose: What is light, and what is its origin? Philosophers still uncertain as to its nature. Doubtful whether an extremely thin and subtle fluid substance, or merely an agitation or undulation of the ether, producing its effects in a similar way to that in which sound is produced; the undulations in the one case striking the *ear* and in the other the *eye*, and so producing the sensation of sound or light respectively. The former, till lately, generally believed; the latter now the prevailing theory. Light now viewed by men of science as *radiant force*. Uncertain whether, by the creation of light at the beginning, we are to understand the creation of the actual force itself, or that of the particular condition or medium of radiation, technically known as *ether*, supposed to permeate space and substance. The latter thought more probable. Of the source of light, the account in Genesis says nothing. Its existence or appearance followed the command: "Let there be light." That it came from an external source, previous to the sun's formation or appearance, seems evident from the alternation of light and darkness during the intervening days. Light ascertained, from the testimony of the rocks, to have operated on the earth ages before man's residence on it. The sun the centre of light, only as endued with a luminous atmosphere which envelopes its opaque body, but through which portions of that body are distinctly visible. The manner in which the light is "parted," or separated from its great solar centre, as much a mystery now as in the days of the patriarch. Known to occupy a certain time in reaching the earth. Its rate of travel ascertained to be about thirteen millions of miles in a minute, and the period required in reaching the earth, about eight minutes. Some of the laws according to which light operates, in recent times satisfactorily ascertained. Known to be composed of different coloured rays—red, yellow, and blue; their composition affording the white light, and their "parting" or

separation, and partial blending, giving the various colours presented by different objects. Exhibited in their pure and blended form in the rainbow; the raindrops separating the rays and refracting them at different angles after the manner of a prism, and so producing the three primary and four secondary colours. The light emanating from the fixed stars generally like that of our own sun, but in some cases coloured; different stars appearing to be different colours.

The question in regard to the *abode* of the light, perhaps referring rather to the sun itself, frequently called "the light," as being the centre and source of it to the earth. Represented as coming forth as a bridegroom "from his chamber" (Ps. xix. 5). The question: Where is that chamber? The earth's annual revolution round the sun and daily rotation on its own axis, not then known. The sun supposed to move from east to west, as it *appears* to do. But whence he rose, and where he remained after setting, a mystery. The Ptolemaic theory of the earth being the centre of the system, and the sun, &c., moving round it, finally succeeded by the Copernican or Newtonian, which places the sun in the centre, at the distance of ninety-five millions of miles from the earth. The sun *appears* to rise in the east and move towards the west, from the earth moving on its axis from west to east. The opposite hemispheres of the globe naturally illuminated and in darkness alternately once in twenty-four hours, the period of one rotation on its axis.

8. *The snow and hail.* Verses 22, 23. "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and of war?" Snow and hail known to be the effects of cold in the higher regions of the atmosphere; the former being condensed vapour congealed before it is formed into drops, and the latter the drops themselves congealed in their descent to the earth. Usually brought by cold winds from the north; their treasures therefore, to those living north of the equator, apparently in the northern regions. These regions probably unknown in the days of Job. The treasures of the snow and hail, however, rather in the higher parts of the atmosphere, where man has not been able to penetrate. Spoken of as "treasures" from their vast abundance, and as being apparently stored up in the clouds. Snow and hail among the Creator's instruments in His government of the world, employed often in a way of judgment. Hail especially an instrument of destruction to the crops of the field. Employed as one of the plagues on Egypt (Exod. ix, 18); and as the means of discomfiting the combined forces of the Canaanites (Josh. x. 11). To be, perhaps, still more grievously employed among the judgments to be inflicted on the kingdom of Antichrist, forming part of the seventh and last vial (Rev. xvi. 21). The sufferings and destruction of Napoleon's Grand Army, in 1812, mainly due to the snow and cold of a Russian winter. Snow and hail among the Almighty's reserved treasures for the discomfiture of His and His Churches' adversaries, to be probably employed in the "battle of that great day of God Almighty,—in the place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. xvi. 14—16).

9. *Rain.* Verse 25—28, 34, 37, 38.—"Who hath divided a water-course (conduit or channel) for the overflowing (inundation or pouring forth) of waters [in the form of rain], or a way for the lightning (or flash) of thunder (the usual precursor of rain in the east, ch. 28, 26: Zech. x. 1); to cause it to rain on the earth where no man is [to care either for the ground or the beasts that live upon it]; on the wilderness, where there is no man [but only the inferior animals to be provided for]; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring? Hath the rain a father? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, [commanding] that abundance of waters may cover thee? Who can number the clouds in wisdom (or 'muster' them as an army for the purpose for which he requires them (2 Kings xxv. 19)? Who can stay (or 'lay,' so as to empty) the bottles of heaven (the clouds, resembling in their form and use the dark-coloured water-skins employed in the East), when the dust groweth into hardness (is fused into a solid mass), and the clouds cleave fast together (thus forming soil for cultivation, instead of mere dust,—the effect of continued drought)?" Still points to the mysteries of meteorology, even yet but imperfectly understood, but evincing a wisdom and a power altogether Divine.

Four circumstances connected with rain here alluded to as exhibiting God's greatness and man's littleness. (1.) *That the rain does not descend in one mass of water from the clouds, but in innumerable channels or tiny rills.* Who makes these channels? what has man to do with the forming of them? Man, as in Egypt, makes channels for conveying the water from the well to irrigate his garden or his field; but who makes those channels that convey the water down from the clouds? (2) *The mysterious production of the rain, by the conversion of invisible into visible vapour, and its condensation into drops, which increase in size as they*

fall to the ground. This atmospheric process unknown in the days of Job, and still a mystery of Divine power and wisdom. "Hath the rain a father?" (3) *The preparation for the rain by the lightning or electric flash, dissolving the rain-cloud by reducing its temperature, or otherwise.* Drops of water known to result from the combination of the two gases of which water is composed, through the introduction of an electric spark. But what power is it which so manages that mysterious element or force called *electricity*, as to produce the copious and fertilizing showers? "Who hath made a way for the lightning?" (4) *That the wilderness receives a supply of rain as well as inhabited places.* Proof of its abundance and the riches of Divine goodness. No stinting with God, neither from want of ability nor willingness to bestow. Enough and to spare with Him. Even the beasts in the solitary waste provided for. His also to make even the solitary place to be glad for His people, and to cause the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose (Is. xxxv. 1). Divine power and goodness able to turn the wilderness into a fruitful field as seen in the oases in African deserts (Is. xxxii. 15). (5) *That the clouds are so managed as to be made the means, by their filling and emptying, like so many huge water skins, of irrigating the earth and ministering to man's necessities.* Who so musters those clouds, like a general his forces, taking account of their number, size, &c., as to have them ready for his service, and to bring them together whenever he pleases to employ them? Who disposes and empties those bottles of heaven?

10. *The dew.* Verse 18.—"Who hath begotten the drops of dew?" Another of the mysteries of nature. Dew long supposed to *fall* on the ground during the night. But whence its fall? There is no cloud. No one ever saw it fall. The process better understood in modern times. The dew rather a formation or deposit than a descent. The moisture in the saturated air, in consequence of the greatly reduced temperature during the night and its contact with the cooler ground, condenses on certain substances and forms drops, like those which stand on the wall of a room, when the air, which has been saturated with moisture, is suddenly cooled by the reduction of the temperature. Usually falls, or is deposited, in clear cold nights after a warm day. Hence found with us especially in autumn. Most copious in warm climates, where the days are hot and the nights often cold. In eastern countries, as in Judæa, the want of rain often compensated by the abundant dew, in cooling and moistening the ground, and in refreshing and promoting vegetation. Hence the frequent allusion to it and to its beneficial effects found in the Scriptures (Gen. xxvii. 28; Deut. xxxiii. 13, 28; Ps. cxxxiii. 3; Prov. xix. 12; Is. xviii. 4). Frequently employed for comparison and metaphor. The Word of God compared to it from its influence on the soul (Deut. xxxii. 2). The people of God compared to it from their influence on the world (Mic. v. 7). God Himself compared to it in relation to his people (Hos. xiv. 5). The converts of Christ compared to it both from their number and beauty, especially as seen in the morning of the resurrection after the night of the tomb (Ps. cx. 3).

11. *The ice and hoar-frost.* Verses 29, 30.—"Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath engendered it? The waters (in consequence of the cold) are hid as with a stone (or, 'being made as a stone'), and the face of the deep (any collection of water) is frozen" ('held bound' or 'holds itself together,' *i. e.* is congealed). Ice known to be water rendered solid by the loss of its natural heat, which keeps its particles separate and so preserves it in a liquid state, but which the water gives out to the atmosphere in contact with it in consequence of the great reduction of its temperature. Hoar-frost simply the dew frozen before it has been formed into drops. The temperature of the atmosphere that to which these and almost all the phenomena of meteorology are due. This again due to the radiant force, or light, as including heat, imparted by the sun to the earth, and then again dispersed into space. Heat an element or force pervading all bodies, and keeping their particles at a certain degree of expansion. Suddenly withdrawn from nature, the globe would shrink into a much smaller compass; what is now in a gaseous state would become liquid; the liquid would become solid; and all vegetable and animal life on the earth's surface would instantly perish. On the other hand, an opposite result would ensue from a much increased degree of heat. Solids would become liquid or be consumed, while liquids would be converted into vapour. The wisdom, power, and goodness of God seen in so tempering the heat given forth from the sun, that both the atmosphere and the earth are in their present ordinary condition. Times indicated by the rocks when a different state of things existed. A time indicated in the Scriptures of truth, when it will be otherwise again (2 Pet. iii. 10, 12).

12. *The heavenly bodies.* Verse 31—33.—"Canst thou bind (restrain, or perhaps unite) the sweet influences (or delights, or according to another reading, 'bonds') of Pleiades (*Marg.*, 'Chimah, or the Seven

Stars"), or loose the bands of Orion? (*Marg.*, 'Chesil,' or the Fool or, Impious one; a magnificent constellation appearing in winter, and therefore connected with stormy weather, hence probably the Hebrew name. Orion a warrior in Greek mythology; the name given from the supposed resemblance of the constellation to a giant or hero; the 'bands' of Orion either the rigours of winter, which bind up vegetation, or the invisible tie which connects the numerous stars that compose it, the telescope revealing myriads more than are visible to the naked eye, particularly in the nebula seen in the belt of the figure). Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth (*Marg.*, 'the [twelve] signs of the Zodiac,' appearing successively through the twelve months of the year), in his season? or, canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? (probably the constellation known as the Great Bear, or the Plough; the Hebrew and Arabic name *Aish* denoting the Bier, the four stars in the body of the Bear forming the Bier itself, and the three in the tail, its 'sons' or attendant mourners: the constellation appropriately said to be 'guided,' not brought forth, —being visible all through the year, and appearing continually to move round the centre which we call the North Pole). Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven (or laws of the heavens)? Canst thou set the dominion (or influence) thereof in the earth?"

The attention of eastern sages directed at an early period to the stars, their time of appearing, and their supposed influence on the earth. Their successive appearance indicative of the seasons of the year and the time suitable for agricultural and other pursuits. Stars early grouped into figures or constellations, to which names were given from their supposed resemblance to terrestrial objects. Twelve of these appeared to rise or come into view successively in the course of the year, thus marking the twelve months. Their names, the Ram, the Bull, &c. These twelve groups or constellations, called the twelve signs of the Zodiac, probably what is here meant by Mazzaroth. The name perhaps identical with one denoting "abodes," as indicating the different stages of the sun in his apparent annual course. Said to be "brought forth," because apparently so; their appearance being probably due to the earth's progress round the sun. Natural things spoken of in the Bible rather as they *appear* to be, than as they are in reality.

The Pleiades or Seven Stars, a group or cluster of stars in the constellation or Sign of the Bull. Their Hebrew name *Chimá*, denoting a heap or cluster, probably given from their appearance. Appears about the middle of April. Hence associated with the season of spring, whence its Latin name—Vergiliæ. The name in the text its Greek one, from a word denoting to "sail"; as indicating the time when navigation might be safely commenced. The "sweet influences," or delights, ascribed, according to the present text, to the Pleiades, as marking the arrival of Spring. The genial change in the weather accompanying the appearance of this constellation, hailed as not merely necessary to vegetation and the sustenance of man and beast, but as also contributing in a high degree to man's comfort and enjoyment. The season of

Spring

loved and celebrated in all ages, as the season—(1) Of returning *brightness and sunshine*, after the clouds and gloom of winter. (2) Of *warmth and comfort*, after the cold and tempests of preceding months. (3) Of *revived life*, both in the vegetable and animal creation—the natural world appearing to burst forth as from a state of death. (4) Of *freshness and beauty*, as seen everywhere in the verdure of the fields, the foliage of the woods, and the flowers of the garden and the meadow. (5) Of *joyousness and gaiety*, exhibited in the melody of birds and hum of insects that fills the air, the flitting butterfly and the sportive fish. (6) Of *love*, as seen especially in the birds that now pair and build their nests, and warble their affection to one another. All nature appears to rejoice and put on festal attire, and man participates largely in the "sweet influences" of Spring.

"Now that the winter's gone, the earth hath lost
Her snow-white robes; and now no more the frost
Candies the grass, or calls an icy cream
Upon the silver lake or crystal stream;
But the warm air thaws the benumbèd earth,
And makes it tender; gives a second birth
To the dead swallow; wakes in hollow tree
The drowsy cuckoo and the humble bee.
Now do a choir of chirping minstrels bring
In triumph to the world the youthful spring
The valleys, hills, and woods in rich array
Welcome the coming of the long'd-for May.
Now all things smile."

Spring fitted and intended—(1) To *awaken gratitude* to its Divine and bountiful Author, who gives us again to rejoice in "the sweet influences of the Pleiades." Then, if ever, it is to be said: "All thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless Thee" (Ps. cxlv. 10). (2) To serve as an *emblem of the spiritual spring*—(i.) *When the soul is renewed and quickened to spiritual life*

by the Holy Ghost, and Jesus arises on it as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings." Man's natural state, in consequence of the Fall, one of winter and spiritual death. Christ came into the world and comes into the soul as the reviving Sun, to impart life, and fruitfulness, and joy. The Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, employed by Him to breathe upon the soul and renew its life. (ii.) *When the believer*, under the same Divine influence, is *restored to liveliness and comfort*, and to the "joys of God's salvation," after a season of darkness, deadness, and tempest. (iii.) When both the *Church and the earth* itself shall be *renewed in life and beauty* at the Lord's advent and the resurrection of the just. A new life then imparted to the believer's body after the winter of the tomb, and a new earth created out of the ashes of the present one, wherein shall dwell righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 12, 13; Rom. viii. 21—23). The Bridegroom's call to the Church then fully realized: "Lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; and the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Cant. ii. 11—13).

The Pleiades, especially the brightest star in the cluster, called Alcyone, recently ascertained to be the centre or axle round which the Solar System revolves, the sun carrying with it the earth and other planets with their satellites, and moving in the direction of the constellation Hercules. The number of stars seen in the cluster, with the aid of a good telescope, nine or ten times as many as those visible to the naked eye. The distance of the group from the sun, thirty-four millions of times greater than that of the sun from the earth. The "influences" of the Pleiades upon the earth, in so attracting it with the whole Solar System as to carry it round it at the rate, it is supposed, of four hundred and twenty-two thousand miles a day, in an orbit which it will require many thousands of years to accomplish, probably unspeakably greater than was dreamt of in the days of Job. Yet perfectly known to Him who asked the question: Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades? and who Himself communicated to the group its mighty power of attraction. The Hebrew name, interpreted by some as denoting a pivot or hinge, in striking accordance with this recent discovery of science. —*See an article on the subject from Dr. McMillan in Dickinson's Theological Quarterly for April*, 1875.

The "ordinances of heaven," or laws governing the motions and influences of the heavenly bodies, much better understood now than in the time of the patriarch. The discovery of these laws one of the greatest achievements of modern science, associated with the names of Newton, Kepler, and Laplace. The laws themselves of a different nature from that contemplated by early sages. The law of *gravitation*,—by which bodies and the particles which compose them act upon each other according to their bulk, with an attracting force which increases as the squares of their distance from each other decrease,—found so far as observation has been able to penetrate, to operate through all space. This law, in connection with another,—that of the *vis inertiæ* of bodies operating as a *centrifugal force*, or the tendency of a body to move on in a straight line when once put in motion—that by which the earth and other planets, with their attendant moons, are preserved in their orbits and carried round the sun. The same law in operation among the fixed stars, some of which are observed to revolve round each other. Each star thus preserved in its own place in the heavens. The same law that which carries our solar system round its centre in the Pleiades, and which probably carries the Pleiades themselves round some other centre hid far away in the unexplored depths of our galaxy; and, possibly, the galaxy itself, with its countless millions of worlds, round some other centre,—perhaps the glorious throne of their Almighty Creator.

The *conservation of force*—or the fact that none of the natural forces—heat, light, electricity, mechanical motion, magnetism, and chemism,—is either created or annihilated in any of the material processes of the universe, but is only *transformed*—either taking the place of or giving place to an equivalent amount of some other force—pronounced by the late Professor Faraday to be "the highest law in physical science which our faculties permit us to perceive." Yet, how little it is that we know of the "ordinances of heaven," or laws of the material universe, we are reminded by the well-known language of one of the greatest discoverers of those laws. According to the authority just quoted, the idea of gravity as varying inversely as the square of the distance, apparently in direct opposition to the principle of the conservation of force; involving, as it appears to do, the creation and annihilation of power to an enormous extent, simply by the change of distance,—a result equal to the "highest acts our minds can appreciate of infinite power upon matter." Here science, notwithstanding her amazing progress in unfolding the mysteries of the universe, is at a stand. Besides her ignorance of the nature of the forces which she has succeeded in discovering, she is unable to explain the apparent opposition between

the two highest physical laws with which she is acquainted. These "ordinances of heaven," as not only "known" but established by the Almighty, singularly expressive of the infinite power and glorious majesty of "Him, with whom we have to do."

The "dominion" or influence of the heavenly bodies upon the earth, also a subject transcending man's present knowledge. The influence of the sun alone upon the earth still full of mystery. Science teaches us that on the light or radiant force (including heat) imparted by the sun, depend well nigh the whole of the phenomena of meteorology; being the cause not only of the temperature of the earth, but of the moistness of the atmosphere, of winds, of clouds, of dew, of rain, of ocean-currents, and of "every one of the elements which, variously combined and conditioned by the earth's external features, go to make up climate.—*Warrington's Week of Creation.* Changes in the condition of our own atmosphere, and so of the weather, believed to be connected with changes in the atmosphere of the sun. The influence of the moon upon the earth, especially upon its waters, well known. A portion of heat discovered to reach us even from the fixed stars. The chemical influence of the solar rays on bodies exposed to the light also well known. The very existence of vegetation dependent on that element or force in those rays called actinism or chemism. Even metals and rocks unable to be exposed to its influence without undergoing a change in consequence of it. The "dominion" or influence of the heavenly bodies, especially of the sun, doubtless intimately connected with the physical forces now known to man, and found to be so correlated as to be capable of producing and being resolved or transformed into each other. Man so far from "setting" that "dominion" in the earth, that he even yet very imperfectly understands it.

13. *Lightning and meteors.* Verses 35, 36. —"Canst thou send lightnings that they may go and say unto thee: Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts (perhaps 'into the dark masses' of cloud or 'into the airy dartings')? or, who hath given understanding to the heart (not here the word always translated 'heart,' but one elsewhere denoting a picture, image, or imagination, as in Is. ii. 16; Lev. xxvi. 1; Ps. lxxiii. 7,—perhaps the forms of the clouds, or the shooting meteors)?" Human powerlessness seen in relation to the lightning. Man able to draw down electricity from the thunder-cloud, and by a suitable apparatus to obtain vivid electric sparks and flashes from the atmosphere. But his feebleness in the presence of this mysterious agent shown in the fact that such attempts have been known to be followed by instant death. Although uncontrollable by man, the lightning yet obedient to the command of its Maker. Its origin in the electricity of which the earth is the reservoir. The earth thus shown to contain within it the elements of its own destruction, which only await the bidding of their Creator to do their work.

The allusions in the 36th verse uncertain. The reference to celestial phenomena favoured, if not rendered certain, by the context. Clouds or meteors probably in view, as objects far beyond man's control, but serving the wise purposes of their Creator as if themselves endowed with intelligence. The first clause possibly a reference to the Aurora Borealis, the well-known lights arising from electricity, and seen sometimes at night shooting up in streams from the northern part of the sky; their motions, especially as seen in more northern latitudes, sometimes amazingly quick and their forms rapidly changing. The second clause of the verse may be an allusion to the phenomenon known as Meteoric Showers or Falling Stars. These meteors usually visible in clear weather about the middle of November. Myriads of small stars appear to shoot out in all directions with the rapidity of lightning, and then suddenly disappear. The nature and origin of the phenomenon still undetermined. To man the motions of these meteors appear in the highest degree arbitrary. But even these, like the lightning-flash, are under the direction of infinite wisdom and in accordance with the will of their Creator. "Not an object in nature left to the reckless sway of chance. All things adjusted with unerring wisdom, managed by infinite power, and overruled for good with paternal care."—*Duncan's Philosophy of the Seasons.*

According to the English version, the questioning in the 36th verse will relate to—

14. *Human reason and intelligence.* "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts," &c. "Wisdom" and "understanding" used to denote reason and intelligence, or the first of the three great classes of mental faculties —the intellect, the emotions, and the will; the intellect including both the *cognitive* or *knowing*, and the *reflective* or *reasoning* faculties. The "inward parts" and the "heart" spoken of as the seat of these faculties. The *brain* now more correctly regarded as the seat and organ of the mind. Three things suggested by the questions in reference to the

Human Intellect.

(1) *Reason and intelligence proper to man.* "Wisdom" found in man's "inward parts,"

and "understanding" in his "heart." Man distinguished from the brute creation by the possession of these faculties of the intellect. Thus qualified to know, love, and intelligently to serve his Creator, to contemplate the works of God around him, to reason on subjects of the most varied and highest import, and to prepare for another and a better life. Only so much "understanding" possessed by the lower animals as to qualify them for the preservation and enjoyment of the present life, and for the propagation and preservation of offspring, as well as to render them, in various respects, serviceable to man. Reason and intelligence in man not something merely differing in degree from the instinct of other animals, but differing from it in kind. Intellect that which allies him both to angels and to God Himself. Constitutes a large portion of the image of his Creator in which he was created. Existed in a much higher degree before sin disordered and depraved his nature. Men now "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. iv. 18). The faculties themselves, however, still in existence as man enters the world. Their development the work of time. That development affected by circumstances, and the means employed for it. Education the great means of developing the mental faculties. The intellect of races and families progressive or retrograde according to such development. The degree of intellect different in different individuals, constitutionally and from birth. This difference, doubtless, in some cases the result of circumstances, but more generally from the good pleasure of the Creator, who even in this respect "divideth to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11). The degree as well as the development of intellect connected with the condition, size, and configuration of the brain, which forms its seat, and is the organ through which it acts. (2) *Reason and intelligence imparted to man by the Creator.* Wisdom "*put*" into the inward parts; "*given*" to the heart. The mind or intellect entirely different and distinct from the material organ through which it acts and manifests itself. Reason and thought not a mere force existing in and belonging to the brain as a material substance. The brain the *seat* and *organ* of thought, not its *cause.* Mind not the production of other physical forces, as heat is transformed into electricity; but something *superadded* to the material organization. Man's physical frame formed out of the dust of the ground, after which God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). Man thus made to partake of an intellectual as well as an immortal nature, which rendered him what his Maker designed him to be—a reflection of His own image (Gen. i. 26). The art, science, and skill of man mediately or immediately the gifts of God. The language of the prophet applicable not merely to agriculture, but to all the arts and manufactures, and to all the sciences which elevate the human mind and distinguish the most enlightened of the human species: "This also cometh from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isa. xxviii. 29). The language of the Almighty concerning Bezaleel, the son of Uri, true of any other similarly eminent in any of the arts of civilised life: "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works," &c. (Exod. xxxi. 3). "In the hearts of all the wise-hearted I have put wisdom" (verse 6). (3) *The impartation of reason and intelligence to man a special exhibition of Divine power and wisdom.* "*Who* put wisdom in the inward parts?" Thought and reason the highest manifestation of power in a creature. Man thus placed far above other creatures greatly his superior in size and physical strength. Able thus to fulfil his Maker's purpose concerning him and the commission given him, to "subdue" the earth and "have dominion" over all other living creatures (Gen. i. 28). Made by the possession of his mental faculties a fellow-worker with God. Enabled, by working upon the materials placed at his hand, to produce other works of power, both of a material and an intellectual nature. Qualified to invent and construct works which are themselves the admiration of others and the multiplication of power. A Watt and an Arkwright enabled to produce machines by which, with a little water and fuel, one man is able to do the work of twenty or a hundred, and the strength of draught-horses can be entirely dispensed with. By a simple apparatus, provided through the human intellect, man is enabled to employ the lightning to convey his messages, and to hold almost immediate fellowship with distant countries and continents. As a co-worker with his Maker, he is enabled, by the faculties which God has given him, to convert the wilderness into a fruitful field, and to cause the desert to "rejoice and blossom as the rose." If God thus puts wisdom and understanding into man, and endows him with so much power, how great the wisdom and power of the Creator Himself!

15. *Beasts and birds of prey.* Verses 39—41—"Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion (or lioness), or fill the appetite of the young lions, when they couch in their dens and

abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander (or, 'and wander,' or 'are famished') for lack of meat." Passes from inanimate to animated nature. The present section properly belonging to the next chapter. Begins with beasts of prey. Their food provided for them by the Creator Himself, by bringing other animals, which they are enabled to overcome and feed upon, within their reach. Some animals formed, by their physical structure, to live upon others. Their character as carnivorous given them by God, who provides for them the sustenance for which their bodily organization is adapted. Even the fierce lioness provided with her food by God. Beasts of prey, with all their ferocity, only a portion of the great family for which the Creator daily provides. But how powerless is man in their presence! How unable to provide for them! Man, since the entrance of sin into the world, obliged to employ his intellect in destroying, instead of supporting, such animals.

The "raven" probably mentioned in contrast with the lion. The largest of the sparrow-order of birds. Feeds on carrion as well as fruit and small animals, and is known even to carry off poultry. An unclean bird, and of little apparent significance; yet the raven cared for by the Creator equally with the noble and majestic lord of the forest. His Divine providence, directed even to the young of the raven, when forsaken by the parent bird, or early expelled by it from the nest. Not a cry of these young ravens but enters into the ears of the great and gracious Creator (Ps. cxlvii. 9). Their cry viewed as directed to Himself as their parent and provider. God cares and provides for the meanest as well as the mightiest of His creatures. A twofold lesson for man. (1) To be *kind to animals*, and, when not injurious or destructive, *attentive to their wants*. (2) To *trust in God* while doing His will. The lesson taught by Jesus to his disciples: "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn: and God feedeth them: how much are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke xii. 24). "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Ps. xxxiv. 10).

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JEHOVAH'S ADDRESS CONTINUED.

Continuation of the questioning. Job now pointed to the animal creation; the passage from inanimate to animated nature having been made at the 39th verse of the previous chapter, instead of the beginning of this. Specimens or representatives of the various great classes of animals adduced—first beasts, then birds, then the inhabitants of the water, or of both land and water. The animals referred to mostly those of the wild class, or in a wild state, rather than domestic or domesticated ones. Exhibited for the most part in their native character as coming from the hand of their Creator. The animals selected distinguished for some special property, habit, or instinct, as indicative of the Creator's power in making, and His Providence in caring for them. The object of the references to reprove and humble Job, by reminding him of the greatness, majesty, sovereignty, power, wisdom, and goodness of Him whose providential dealings he had been tempted to arraign. Many things in connection with the lower animals mysterious and incomprehensible to man; why not in connection with man himself? The manifestation of Divine power in the animal creation, as well as of Divine wisdom and goodness in providing for, sustaining, preserving, and governing the various tribes of living creatures, a sufficient argument to silence all objections and murmurs as to the justice of His providential dealings.

The appeal here made by Jehovah to animated nature an indication of man's duty, as far as he has opportunity, to observe and make himself acquainted with the structure and habits of the lower animals. The visible, and especially the animal creation, moreover, to be observed and studied *as works of God*, and as *expressive of His attributes and perfections, both as its Creator and Governor.* Man always and everywhere surrounded with memorials and lessons of God's character and providence. The works of nature, both animate and inanimate, intended by their Creator to be so observed and studied by men, that He may derive praise, and they both pleasure and profit. The language of an eminent philosopher (Sedgwick) as true of natural history as of the Newtonian philosophy: "A study affecting our moral powers and capabilities; teaches us to see the finger of God in all things, animate and

inanimate, and gives us an exalted conception of His attributes, placing before us the clearest proofs of their reality; and so prepares, or ought to prepare, the mind for the reception of that higher illumination which brings the rebellious faculties into obedience to the Divine will." Constant reference in Scripture to the animal creation as illustrative of God's character and man's duty. Nature, or creation—God's own Book—ever open to our view. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard;" "Consider the ravens;" "Behold the lilies of the field,"—recorded specimens of Divine teaching.

The reference here made to the various animals, such as to indicate the pleasure and satisfaction with which the Almighty contemplates the visible works of His hand. In accordance with the Mosaic narrative, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31). "The Lord shall rejoice in His works" (Ps. civ. 31). A sufficient reason why *man* should rejoice in them. The better a man is acquainted with God's works in general, and with the animal creation in particular, the greater the pleasure he will derive from them. After the lion and the raven, Job is pointed to—

1. *The Wild Goat or Ibex.* Verse 1.—"Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?" The wild goat, probably the animal known among naturalists as the Ibex—the Bedin of the Arabs—a bold and powerful animal, armed with two huge sweeping horns, curving over its back and often three feet long. Inhabits the most elevated summits of the highest mountain ranges in the whole eastern continent. Stands two feet six or eight inches in height, and is extremely active and vigorous. Vigilant and wary, it only descends during the night to pasture in the woods, repairing again at sunrise to the bleak mountain summits. "Its chase very arduous; the animal leading its pursuer, unless he can steal upon it unawares with his rifle, a dangerous track over steep and rugged mountain pinnacles, along the brink of precipices, and over fearful chasms; and when at last, hard pressed, often turning upon its foe with impetuous rapidity, and hurling him down the steep rocks." Its favourite haunts in Europe the Alps, the Apennines, the Pyrenees, and the Tyrolese mountains. Doubtful whether it or the *Paseng* of the Caucasus and of Persia (the *Capra Ægagra* of Cuvier), is the original stock of our domestic goat. The wild goat referred to as being so far beyond man's power to manage it, or even become familiarly acquainted with its habits. The "knowledge" intended probably not simply that of mere acquaintance, but of care. "Knowest thou," &c., so as to attend to, watch over, &c. Certain animals so constituted that man may both become easily and thoroughly acquainted with them and their habits, and be able to attend to their wants and aid them in their emergencies. The case with others the reverse. The shepherd knows the time when his ewes are to lamb; but who knows "the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?" Hence, observe—(1) *A proof of the Creator's care over the animal creation.* With no human eye to observe the wild goats, and no shepherd's hand to aid them, God's eye marks and His hand helps them in their greatest difficulties. (2) *A lesson of humility and modesty.* Man ignorant of the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth; how then shall he be able to fathom the designs and understand the reasons of God in His providential dealings? What presumption for a creature of so limited knowledge, even of the humbler works of God, to question the wisdom and justice of His moral government! (3.) *A comfort for God's tried people.* Even the wild goats of the rock have their time of parturition assigned them by their Creator. That time known, marked, and attended to by Him. How much more everything connected with His intelligent offspring, and most of all with those who love and fear Him! If God so watches over and cares for the wild goat, will He not much more watch over and care for *you*?

2. *The Hind, or Female Stag or Antelope.* Verses 1—4.—"Canst thou mark (or watch) when the hinds do calve? Canst thou number the months that they fulfil (knowing the period of their gestation, and waiting like the shepherd in regard to his ewes, till they bring forth their fawns)? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves (or go down on their knees in their labour), they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows (put forth their young which occasion their pains). Their young ones are in good liking (sleek and in good condition); they grow up with corn (or, in the desert or open country); they go forth (to obtain food for themselves), and return not again unto them (viz., to the hinds, their mothers)." The animal more especially alluded to doubtless the gazelle, or Arabian antelope. Formerly numerous in Syria and Arabia. Seen in large herds, bounding over the plain with amazing fleetness. Resemble the stags in the lightness of their figure and the swiftness of their course. In Africa, the usual prey of the lion and the panther. Remarkable for their timidity, as well as for their elegance and beauty; especially for the

soft expression of their large, dark, lustrous eyes. The hind or female referred to is, like the ibex, an animal beyond human care and attention, but observed and provided for by its Creator. The providence of God noted in not only delivering the mother in her pangs, but in caring for her offspring. Without either man or mother to attend to its wants, the young fawn, under the care of its Creator, grows up sleek and well-conditioned. Observe—(1.) *The tenderness of the Creator's care.* Indicated by the special reference to the animal's labour—the time of its maternal "sorrows." Its labour said to be naturally with difficulty and pain. The animal, however, said to be taught by the instinct given to it, to employ an herb called *Siselis* in order to facilitate the birth. (2.) *Comfort to suffering believers.* The Creator not indifferent to the pangs of the hind. Will He be indifferent to the sorrows and pains of His intelligent creatures, made after His own image, and especially of His own redeemed and adopted children? If He attends to the labour of the irrational creatures, and marks the time when it takes place, is anything connected with His own children beyond his observation and regard? (3.) Humbling, that while the Creator makes the sufferings of such creatures the object of his care, man should occasion them in the prosecution of his sport. Touching picture, drawn by the greatest of uninspired poets, of a dying stag shot by the hunter:—

"The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting; and the big round tears
Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase."

3. *The Wild Ass.* Verses 5—8.—"Who hath sent out the wild ass free (unrestrained to roam at large)? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass (a different name in the original text from the former; *that* employed more in Palestine, *this* in Chaldea; both indicative of a rapid flight; the latter, perhaps, also of the animal's noise in braying)? Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land (*Marg.*, 'salt places') his dwellings (or haunts). He scorneth the multitude (or din) of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver (or officer compelling to public service—the animal enjoying his liberty in the desert, and defying all attempts to subdue and domesticate him). The range of the mountains is his pasture (or 'he searches or roams the mountains as his pasture'), and he searcheth out every green thing (as rare in the desert, his proper habitation)." The wild ass, an animal met with in great numbers in Arabia Petræa. According to the Arabs, perfectly untamable. In fleetness equal to the gazelle; to overtake it a feat which only one or two of the most celebrated mares have been known to accomplish. Its food the saltest plants of the desert. In the East, the symbol of uncontrolled freedom. Its name assumed by Persian kings. The wild independence of Ishmael and his descendants (the Bedouin Arabs) indicated by the same figure: "He will be a wild (*Heb.*, wild ass) man" (Gen. xvi. 12). A picture also of the wayward and self-willed (ch xi. 12; Jer. ii. 24; Hos. viii. 9). The wild ass here selected by the Almighty on account of its natural freedom from restraint and its wild enjoyment of its desert haunts. Referred to in order to show—(1) *The Creator's sovereignty*, in not only making some species of animals naturally wild and others tame, but making a similar difference in the same species. (2) *The Almighty's power over animated nature.* (3) *His universally extended providence.* The wild ass, though beyond man's power to overtake or capture, yet only one of the innumerable objects of Jehovah's care. Its freedom and wildness given by Him. Its abode in the wilderness appointed by Him. The salt plants of the desert given by Him for its support. Hence observe—(1) Man himself entirely in the Almighty's hands. (2) Jehovah's right to dispose of His creatures as He sees good. The potter has power over the clay to make out of the same mass vessels of various kinds and for various purposes (Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 21.) (3) Man, unable to give law to the wild ass, how much less to His Maker?—(*Henry*). (4) God, who has the wild ass entirely under His control, can easily subdue the wildest and most wayward human spirit. (5) Variety a characteristic in the Creator's works. Wildness and independence given by Him to the wild ass. The Almighty tied to no uniform type. (6) Man's true liberty, not that of the wild ass,—an unrestrained independence; but to be under willing, intelligent, and loving subjection to his Maker's laws. The liberty of a child of God not to be "without law to God, but under the law to Christ" (1 Cor. ix. 21). The true liberty that with which Christ makes his people free (Gal. v. 1). His yoke easy, and his burden light (Matt. xi. 30).

4. *The Unicorn.* Verses 9—12.—"Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib (or, spend the night at thy stall, like an ox or other domestic animal)? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow (guide him with a rope or rein in ploughing thy field)? or will he harrow the valleys (or low grounds, especially suited for

tillage) after thee (after thy direction and following thy steps like the quiet ox,—the husbandman going before the harrow, though behind the plough)? Wilt thou trust him (have confidence in him as an animal helpful in the labour of the fields) because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him (thy grain, the fruit of thy labour,—to watch it by night while remaining on the threshing floor)? Wilt thou believe him that he will bring home thy seed (or grain, from the field after being reaped or threshed, like an ox yoked in the waggon), and gather it into thy barn (or granary)?"

The animal here intended apparently one of the ox kind, probably the wild ox or oryx (*aurochs*),—the *urus* of the ancients, "generally but erroneously considered as the wild stock of our horned cattle." A savage animal that has now taken refuge in the great marshy forests of Lithuania, the Krapacs, and the Caucasus; but which formerly inhabited all the temperate parts of Europe. The largest quadruped proper to Europe—(*Cuvier*). The animal subdued with difficulty. Extremely powerful: hence the reference in the text. Probably the "strong bulls of Bashan" (Ps. xxii. 12). Once roamed freely in the forests of Palestine. Large herds of them still in the region beyond Jordan. Often mentioned by Arabian poets. Its two horns include a space of ten feet from tip to tip. The animal thought, however, by some to be a species of antelope with two horns, formerly abundant in Egypt and the south-west of Asia; described by Aristotle as one-horned, and appearing on the Egyptian monuments sometimes with one and sometimes with two horns. By others, the unicorn, or *reem*, thought to be the rhinoceros, one species of which—the rhinoceros of India—has only one horn. This well-known animal also one of enormous strength, being scarcely less in size than the elephant. That of India, sluggish in his movements, and wandering through his native plains with a heavy step. At certain times very dangerous, impetuously attacking every animal that attracts his notice. The African rhinoceros has a double horn, the principal one rising about nine or ten inches above the nose, and inclining backwards; the other immediately behind it, a short thick one. The Hebrew name (*reem*) generally translated in our English Bible the "unicorn," or one-horned. The animal, however, apparently spoken of as having two horns (Num. xxiv. 8; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Ps. xxii. 21.) Frequently mentioned in Scripture as distinguished for its strength. The *reem* of the Arabs an animal with two horns. The name apparently significant of its loftiness and power. The unicorn of heraldry long thought a merely fabulous animal. Its existence, however, now contended for by some, who allege ancient and modern eye-witnesses of it. Its figure—a head like a horse, cloven feet, the tail of a boar, and one horn in the forehead. The representation of such an animal found among the ruins of Persepolis.

The animal referred to in the text as one of huge strength, but beyond the power of man to render it serviceable to him in the works of the field. Fitted by its physical structure and great strength, to be employed like the ox or ass in agricultural pursuits; but, from its intractable disposition, not to be subjugated by man for that purpose. The reference intended by the Almighty to remind Job of his own littleness and the power of his Creator. Observe—(1) *A lesson of humility and modesty for man.* If unable to bind and bring into his service an animal like the *reem*, how should he be able to contend with his Maker? If unable to rule a mere creature, how unfit to question the dealings of his Creator! (2) *The effect of sin.* The animals originally designed to serve man. Dominion over them given him by the Creator (Gen. i. 26, 28; Ps. viii. 6). That dominion forfeited by the Fall. (3) *The Divine sovereignty.* Some animals apparently such as by nature to be more useful and serviceable to man than others. God's reasons for endowing the animals with their various properties unknown to us. Mysteries in creation; no wonder if we find similar mysteries in providence.

5. *The Ostrich.* Verses 13—18.—"Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? (*Marg.*, 'the feathers of the stork and ostrich?' Or the whole verse may read thus: 'The wing of the ostriches moveth gaily: but is it the wing and feathers of the stork?"—a bird remarkable for maternal affection, of which the ostrich appears to be so deficient). Which (or because, since) she leaveth (or, deposits) her eggs in the ground, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them (in the exposed place where she lays them). She is hardened (or acts hardly) against her young ones, as though they were not hers (or, 'for those which are not her own'): her labour (in preparing her nest, and sitting on her eggs) is in vain, without fear (she being without solicitude for the preservation of her young). Because God hath deprived her (or, 'made her forgetful') of wisdom (the prudence necessary for preserving her young), neither hath he imparted unto her understanding (such, or so much as he has implanted in the animals in general, usually called instinct). What time she lifteth up (or rouseth) herself or

high (erecting her head and body as well as her wings the latter being used to aid her in *running* rather than flying), she scorneth the horse and his rider (when pursuing her in the chase)."

The ostrich referred to as an animal generally regarded as deficient in natural forethought, especially in reference to the perservation of her young (Lam. iv. 3), while endowed with extraordinary speed, so as to be able to secure her own safety by flight. One of the two known species (the *struthio camelus*) abounds in the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa. This the ostrich mentioned here and elsewhere in the Bible. Attains the height of eight feet. So swift that no animal is able to overtake it. The wings white and black, not unlike those of the stork; furnished with the well-known loose and flexible, elegant and slender-stemmed feathers; and sufficiently long to increase the animal's speed in running, serving both for sail and oar. Being found in hot countries, the ostrich is content to lay its eggs, from thirty to fifty at a time, each weighing nearly three pounds, about a foot below the surface in the sand. Outside the tropics, however, she is said to brood over her eggs with great care, and courageously to defend her young. From the animal's known neglect of her young in Arabia, it is designated by the Arabs the "impious bird," as in contrast with the stork, which is called the "pious" one. Said to hatch her eggs only for a time, and to leave them frequently during the day at the least noise, going to a great distance and sometimes never returning to them. Plays and frisks about on all occasions, "moving her wings gaily," and would be always fanning and hiding herself with them. Her eggs left exposed to the view of the traveller and the foot of the wild beasts that frequent the desert. Often addled before she returns from her long absence in search for food. Sometimes, during her absence, found sitting on the eggs of another bird. Its sense of taste so obtuse that it swallows rags, leather, &c., and even pebbles and pieces of metal. The bird proverbially stupid. "More foolish than an ostrich," an Arab proverb. Its speed calculated by Dr. Livingstone to be about twenty-six miles an hour. The stride of one in the Sahara found to be from twenty-two to twenty-eight feet.

The "peacock" probably not intended in the verse. The word so rendered, quite different from that in 1 Kings x. 22. Literally, denotes "singing ones," and probably given to characterize the ostrich, distinguished for its cries. The peacock distinguished not so much for the beauty of its *wings* as of its tail. Originally brought from India. First known in Palestine and Arabia in the time of Solomon, who imported it into his kingdom. Introduced into Europe by Alexander the Great. Its magnificent plumage, most splendid in a wild state, like the flowers of the field,—indicative of the Creator's pleasure in the beautiful, and of the beauty residing in Himself. In the peacock, the beauty apparently not accompanied with other excellencies.

From the whole section, observe—(1) *God's providential care of His creatures.* Provides for the young of the ostrich even when the care and affection of the parent fail. (2) *His sovereignty in the endowments of His creatures.* Instinctive care for the preservation of offspring strong in the animals in general; weak in the ostrich. "Wisdom and understanding"—whether in the lower form as in the brute creation, or in the higher, as in man—the gift of God. Its degrees in both cases according to His own pleasure. The ostrich endowed with remarkable speed, but with little sense. The stork, with much humbler plumage, yet gifted with much greater natural affection. An example related of two which had built their nest on the roof of a house in Delft, a town of Holland, and which, when the house was on fire, first endeavoured to carry off all their young, and when unable to do this, kept flapping their wings over them as if to cool the air; and at last, as the flames drew nearer, sat down over the nest to die with them. (3) *The various endowments of animals designed for man's instruction.* Intended to teach man both concerning God and himself. Some of those endowments designed for man's imitation; others the reverse. The stork an *example* to parents in regard to their children; the ostrich a *warning.* Indifference and neglect in regard to those committed to our care monstrous even in irrational creatures: much more so in *man.* Like the "labour" of the ostrich, that of parents and teachers often "in vain," from the want of "fear" and solicitude for the *preservation* of those for whom they have laboured. "*Those most likely to lose their labour who have least fear of losing it.*" While men sleep, the enemy sows his tares. Such solicitude especially needful in the case of children leaving the parental roof. Watchful care always necessary to guard the young against the influence of evil company, and the dangers incident from an ungodly world. Prayerful solicitude constantly required on behalf of those for whose spiritual benefit we have laboured, and in whom have appeared the beginnings of grace. Early grace watched over by God, but not therefore the less to be watched over by man.

6. *The Horse.* Verses 19—25.—"Hast thou given the horse strength (or courage, or rather both combined)? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder (with the terror of his neighings; or, 'with lofty quivering mane'—the indistinctness of the figure heightening its sublimity)? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper (or, 'bound like a locust')? The glory of his nostrils (or neighings) is terrible (or, 'a terror'—more especially to the Hebrews, little acquainted with war-horses, Jer. viii. 16). He paweth in the valley (or 'plain'—usually selected for the battle-field where cavalry were to be employed); and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed men (or, 'boldly he advanced against the weapons'). He mocketh at fear (what would cause fear in others), and is not affrighted (by all the terrors of the battle-field); neither turneth he back from the [face or presence of] of the sword. The quiver (or its contents, the arrows) rattleth against (or upon) him: the glittering spear and the shield (or, 'the flash of the spear and the lance'). He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage (in his impetuous eagerness for the fight): neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet (or, 'standeth still when there is the sound of the trumpet'). He saith among (or at the blast of) the trumpets, Ha, ha: and he smelleth the battle afar off—the thunder of the captains (animating the hosts to the fight), and the shouting" (of the warriors).

The reference to the horse apparently suggested by the mention made at the close of the preceding paragraph, of "the horse and his rider." The war-horse here especially referred to. The description acknowledged to be unequalled anywhere for sublimity. Sufficient in itself to place the writer among the first of poets. The war-horse referred to as an example of courage and noble bearing. The reference intended to impress Job with the majesty of Him whose creature this noble and courageous animal is.

The horse exhibited in the text as the noblest specimen among inferior animals. Those of Arabia and Egypt especially famous. The horse believed to exist in Arabia, the home of the patriarch, in a finer condition than in any other country. Still the chief treasure of the Bedawin Arab. Formerly many of them in a wild state in the Arabian deserts; only caught in pits, and then subjugated through hunger and fatigue. Believed by the Arabs to be endowed with a nature superior to that of other animals, and to be next to man himself. At first employed by fallen man chiefly in war, yoked to a chariot in which the warrior stood. The earliest mention of them in connection with the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (Exod. xiv. 6—9). Probably employed in Egypt and elsewhere on state occasions (Gen. xli. 43). Used also early in the chase, apparently intended in verse 18. Among Egyptian monuments, only one of a horse and its rider, and that comparatively recent. Horses mentioned among the valuable possessions of Solomon brought up by him from Egypt. Among the ancient Assyrians used indiscriminately for war and hunting. Israel spoken of by Jehovah as His "goodly horse in the battle;" as endowed by Him with strength and courage, and employed for the conquest of heathen adversaries (Zech. x. 3). The horse, as distinguished for its beauty as well as its strength and courage, employed as a simile for the Church of Christ under the figure of a beautiful woman (Cant. i. 9). Elsewhere noticed in Scripture for his strength and eagerness for the battle (Ps. cxlvii. 10; Jer. viii. 6). Yet a vain thing for safety (Ps. xxxiii. 17).

From the description of the war-horse observe—(1) *The example of the Almighty in contemplating and admiring the works of His hand.* God represented as rejoicing in His works, whether the feathers of the ostrich or the spirit of the war-horse, the intelligence of a seraph or the piety of a man. A refined pleasure in contemplating and admiring the works of God; a *Divine* pleasure in contemplating them as such. God's example to be imitated by His intelligent children. (2) *An example exhibited in the war-horse, of courage and fearlessness in the discharge of duty and in the service of our Divine Master* (See again Zech. x. 3; Cant. i. 9). The courage and impetuosity of the war-horse too often imitated in a contrary direction (Jer. viii. 6). Man capable of being employed as Satan's war-horse as well as Jesus Christ's. The latter his glory and felicity; the former his disgrace and ruin. (3) *The war-horse, in some respects, a faint reflection of his Maker's excellence.* "Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle?" (Is. xxvii. 4). All creature excellence only a shadow of the infinite and uncreated excellence of the Creator. All endowments and excellencies found in the creature intended to lead the thoughts to the Creator as the source and sum of all excellence. (4) *Mystery connected with all God's works.* The horse, the noblest of God's irrational creatures, yet here admired by his Maker as displaying his excellence in what cannot but be regarded as, in many respects, Satan's work. The battle-field, usually the theatre of evil passions, and the delight of the enemy of God and man. Sin, the origin of all strife and warfare; yet war and battle not always sinful. Sometimes man's duty, and com-

manded by God. In some respects, the battle is the Lord's. The Lord of hosts mustereth the hosts for the battle. Nebuchadnezzar God's servant in his war against Tyre (Ezek. xxix. 17—20. War employed by God as His own terrible instrument in His government of the world. God's glory in overruling man's sin and Satan's malice to his own praise and the welfare of the universe. Napoleon and his battles, God's scourge for the benefit of Europe and the world. Yet on the field of Waterloo, "those terrible grey horses" a terror to him who had been the terror of the nations. "I have created the waster to destroy." A prospective use in many of God's creatures. The creature "made subject to vanity" through Adam's fall. The time to come when the creature, groaning and travailing in pain until now through man's sin, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 20—22). The day hastening on, when the noble horse shall find other employment than rushing with its rider into the din of the battle, and careering among garments rolled in blood. The promise in connection with Christ's kingdom to be fulfilled: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire." (Is. ii. 4; Ps. xlvi. 9). The last inspired mention of the war-horse, and perhaps the last use of him as such, made in connection with "the battle of the great day of God Almighty," in the place "called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon;" and with the symbolical appearance of the Faithful and True witness upon a white horse, clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, in righteousness judging and making war as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and followed by the armies of heaven; these also "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. xvi. 14—16: xix. 11—14, 18—21.

7. *The Hawk.* Verse 26.—"Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings towards the south?" The reference to birds of prey and those feeding on carrion probably suggested by the battle-field mentioned in the previous section. The hawk, or falcon, selected as a specimen and representative of the feathered tribe, from the rapidity of its flight, and perhaps also from its being migratory in its habits. Birds of the hawk order (*accipitres*), placed by naturalists highest in the list, including not only hawks and falcons, but eagles and vultures. Are among birds what the lion and other carnivorous animals are among quadrupeds. Known by their talons and hooked beaks, by which they seize and devour other birds and even the weaker quadrupeds and reptiles. Plumage dense and quills strong, giving them great power on the wing, and enabling them to pursue or pounce at once upon their prey. Perhaps the name in the text one of a generic kind, including all such birds of prey. Falcons, with naturalists, the second and by far the most numerous division of those predaceous birds that pursue their prey in the daytime. The greater number prey on living animals. The falcon proper, the most courageous bird in proportion to its size.—Two things in the text referred to as indicative of the wisdom of God in relation to the hawk:—

First: *Its Flight*—"Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom?" The hawk mentioned by Homer as the swiftest of birds. The rapidity with which the hawk and many other birds occasionally fly, probably not less than at the rate of 150 miles an hour. A falcon escaping from Fontainbleau, in France, found to have reached Malta, 1350 miles distant, after twenty-four hours. The common falcon formerly employed in hunting, chiefly from its rapid flight. Builds her nest in the most elevated and inaccessible cliffs, whence she darts down with rapid wing upon her prey, descried at a distance. An inhabitant of northern latitudes, whence her flight towards the South.

Second: *Its Migration.*—"Stretcheth her wings towards the south,"—as if for a warmer climate. Many animals, unfit to provide against the vicissitude of the seasons by varying the quantity or colour of their dress, enabled by the providence of God to protect themselves by shifting their quarters, so as to live throughout the whole year in a temperature suited to their constitution, and at the same time to obtain an abundant supply of food. The migration of birds an object of observation from an early period. "The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming" (Jer. viii. 7). Birds of passage not confined to any particular order or tribe; nor distinguished by similarity in habits or kind of food. Some birds stationary in one district, migratory in another.

Observe—(1) *The wisdom of God in adapting birds for flight.* The general form of the body of birds, one best calculated for gliding with the last resistance through the air. Everything in its structure contrived to give it *lightness.* The horny materials of the feathers formed into hollow cylinders, exceedingly strong when compared with their weight. A similar shape given to the cylin-

drical bones, which are fashioned into tubes, with dense but thin sides; most of the other bones likewise made hollow, but containing only air. The neck exceedingly long and flexible, to enable the bird in flying exactly to balance itself, by bringing the centre of gravity precisely to the proper point. *The feathers of the bird a marvellous contrivance.* Made to consist of three parts—the quill, the shaft, and the vane. A mould made for every feather, "in what may be called a feather manufactory." This manufactory not merely in action once during the life of the bird, but at every time of moulting—generally once a year. The feather remarkable for its strength as well as its lightness. The vane of the feather so disposed that the impulse of the air occurs first where the feather does not yield. The wing adapted for flight by its striking the air below it with a certain force, and so causing a reaction of the air upwards exactly equal to it, the bird rising or sinking as the force of the stroke is greater or less than its weight. The wings also employed by the bird in steering its course, as the rower turns his boat by using only his right or left oar. The tail made to act as a supplementary organ for the same purpose. The tail, however—in addition to its serving as the rudder of a ship,—by expanding and offering a considerable surface to the air, fulfils some of the offices of a third wing, and serves also to poise the body of the bird. (2) *The wisdom and goodness of God in the migration of birds.* An admirable instance of the Creator's care, that birds are endowed with an instinct which enables them to know where and when to direct their flight, so as to find a more genial climate during the colder season in their native home. (3) *The hawk, as well as other migratory birds, an example to men in relation to God their Saviour.* "The stork, &c., know the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord" (Jer. viii. 7). Christ provided by the love of God, as the sinner's shelter from the certain storm of Divine wrath against sin. Men invited to dwell in Him as "in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest" (Isa. xxxii. 2, 19). The Saviour's complaint that sinners "know not the time of their merciful visitation." "O, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not" (Luke xix. 41—44; Matt. xxiii. 37).

8. *The Eagle.* Verses 27—30.—"Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high. She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place (or mountain-castle). From thence she seeketh her prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she." The eagle a species of the same order of birds as the hawk (*accipitres*), and belonging to the *falcon* genus. The largest of the genus, and the most powerful of all the birds of prey. Probably intended, however, to include *vultures* as well, especially the bearded or eagle-vulture (*Gypaetus*), which, rather than the eagle, feed on carrion. The bearded or eagle-vulture, though differing both in head and body from the eagle, yet resembling it in its robust form and general habits, except that it feeds on dead flesh, which the eagle rarely does. Equals, or exceeds, the largest eagle in size, and is found throughout the great mountain chains of the Old World. Apparently referred to in Mic. i. 16; as its head and neck are entirely destitute of feathers, which those of the proper eagle are not. The eagle referred to in the text on account of—(1) Its *lofty flight.* "Doth the eagle mount up," &c. Its great bodily power and ample wing fit the bird for a lofty and majestic flight. The eagle-vulture about four feet from the beak to the tip of the tail, and from nine to ten feet in the extent of its wings. The peculiarity of the eagle, to fly directly upward till out of sight. Its flight referred to by the prophet: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. xl. 31). Hence also said to have an eye fitted to gaze upon the sun. (2) Its *inaccessible abode.* "She maketh her nest on high," &c. The eagle, and the eagle-vulture, both select the most inaccessible pinnacles as the site of their eyrie. (3) Its *acute vision.* "Her eyes behold afar off." The sight of the eagle, as of birds of prey in general, remarkably acute. Such birds endowed with the power of pushing out and drawing in the lenses of the eye, as the object is more or less distant, so as to discern from its lofty abode the prey far beneath it, and to see it no less distinctly as it descends. (4) Their *appetite for flesh and blood.* "Her young ones also suck up blood," &c. The greater number of the *falcon* class of birds, to which the eagle belongs, feed on living prey, while the eagle-vulture, like birds of the *vulture* genus, also feeds on carrion. Hence the battle-field the great attraction for the latter. Eagles said only to drink blood. The young ones trained to this in the nest, to which the parent-bird brings the prey.

Observe from the section—(1) The *wisdom of the Creator* in respect to birds and beasts of prey. Exhibited—(i.) in providing that one class of animals prey upon another. According to the present constitution of

nature, no other system could long exist except that which operated as a check on animal production, and preserved a balance of power between all creatures. (ii.) In providing by means of such animals for the removal of dead bodies left on the surface of the earth. Vultures, and even eagles, among birds and wolves, jackals, and hyænas, among quadrupeds, employed by the Creator as the earth's scavengers—in removing its offal, and especially the carcases of animals, which would otherwise tend to corrupt the air with pestilential exhalations, and unfit parts of the earth for the abode of the living. (3) The *eagle viewed as an emblem.* May be regarded as an emblem—(i.) Of *God* Himself, in His tender care of and attention to the wants of His creatures. "Her young ones suck up blood." "As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them in her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him' (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12). (ii.) Of *believers.* (*a*) In their *upward ascent.* "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Believers' journey a heavenward one. Believers not to have their affection set on things on the earth, but to "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth" (Col. iii. 1, 2). The unregenerate burrow in the earth, as moles and worms; believers mount upwards, as with eagles' wings. The disposition to do so, from their new spiritual and Divine nature; their ability, imparted by the Holy Spirit in connection with their waiting upon God (Isa. xl. 31). (*b*) In their *lofty and safe abode.* "They shall dwell on high; their place of defence is the munitions of rocks" (Isa. xxxiii. 16). Their dwelling in God Himself, the Rock of Ages. Their abode, the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. Jehovah Himself their refuge and fortress. Their safe shelter, the Rock that is higher than they (Ps. xci. 1, 2,; lxi. 2, 3). (*c*) In their *spiritual vision.* Believers enabled to "see afar off" (2 Pet. i. 9). Once blind, but now see. Their eyes anointed with Christ's eye-salve (Rev. iii. 17). Believers behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Behold the glory of Jesus, as that of the Only Begotten of the Father (2 Cor. iii. 18; John i. 14). Endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. See promised glory afar off. Look at the things that are unseen and eternal (Heb. xi. 13, 27; 2 Cor. iv. 18). Behold, by the eye of faith, the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off (Isa. xxxiii. 17). (*d*) In their *feeding, by faith, on the flesh and blood of the Lamb that was slain for them.* "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; he that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51, 54, 56).

CHAPTER XL.

JEHOVAH'S ADDRESS CONTINUED.

A pause in the Almighty's address apparently indicated in the commencement of the present chapter. The language in which it is resumed, together with the reply of Job immediately following, implies also a suspension of the argument, which seems only to be taken up at the fifteenth verse—when the Almighty spoke a second time out of the whirlwind. This is usually explained on the ground that Job's conviction and repentance, though expressed in verses 4 and 5 in reply to the Almighty's appeal in verse 2, were not yet sufficiently deep, and that the argument and means of correction are on that account resumed. It is conjectured, however, by some that an accidental dislocation of the parts has taken place, and that the first fourteen verses of the chapter originally followed the description of Leviathan and the first six verses of the succeeding chapter. In this way the narrative is believed better to correspond with the seventh verse of the forty-second chapter, which seems to make the Almighty the last speaker; while the fourteenth verse of the present chapter forms a manifestly appropriate and impressive conclusion to the Divine address. Taking the narrative, however, as it stands in the text, we have—

I. The application of the preceding address. Verses 1, 2.—"Moreover the Lord answered Job and said: Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him (or, 'will the corrector of the Almighty still contend with Him?' Or, 'is the disputer with the Almighty yet instructed')?—He that reproveth God, let him answer it" (viz., the questions just proposed). Observe—

1. *A sin most offensive to God, to contend with Him by disputing the equity of His government and the reasonableness of His providential dispensations.* This Job's sin. The sin to which fallen human nature, even

in believers, is always liable. The sin into which Asaph felt himself falling (Ps. lxxiii. 2—15). Conspicuously the sin of Jonah.

2. *The contemplation of the greatness and sovereignty of God as Creator and Ruler of the universe, fitted to silence all questionings and complainings in regard to His providential procedure.* This the object of the Almighty's address, and of the reference made by Him to His power, wisdom, and goodness as seen in the creation, preservation, and government of the earth, with all the tribes of its inhabitants, as well as of the worlds above and around us, and of all the various forces and phenomena of nature. Such a Being can require no instruction from any of His creatures; and for even the highest of them to think to reprove Him for any of His doings can only be the summit of presumption and folly. All ground of complaining against God on the part of His creatures removed by His infinitely glorious perfections. Those perfections sufficient foundation for our most assured confidence in the Divine procedure. A Being possessed of such perfections able only to do what is wise, and just, and good. Enough to hear in the darkest dispensations: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. xlvi. 10).

II. Job's Confession. Verses 3—5.—"Then Job answered the Lord and said: Behold, I am vile (mean and contemptible): what shall I answer Thee (either as to these questions or Thy conduct and procedure)? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth (in token of silence and conviction). Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea twice, but I will proceed no farther." In this confession observe—

1. *The discovery.* "I am vile." Abraham's acknowledgment—"Am but dust and ashes." All flesh grass. Man a worm. His days on earth as a shadow. But of yesterday, and knowing nothing. Even the nations less than nothing, and vanity. The question appropriate and becoming: "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Vile in his origin, and creature-nature; much viler still in his character as a sinner. His proper place therefore in the dust, with his hand upon his mouth. Murmurings and complainings against God's procedure monstrous in any creature, but especially so in one so vile as man. Note—(1) *God made man in his own image, but sin has made him vile.* The character of sin to debase; that of righteousness to exalt. Sin renders man rebellious against his Creator, injurious to his neighbour, brutish in himself. Sin, the abominable thing which God hates. (2) *Repentance changes men's views of themselves as well as of God.* Job's former language: "I am not wicked." "I would go as a prince before God;" Now it is: "Behold, I am vile." The language of Saul, the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are;" that of Paul, the penitent: "I am the chief of sinners." (3) *Job's discovery a blessed one.* The result of Divine teaching and of God's revealing himself to the soul. Isaiah's acknowledgment when he beheld the glory of the Lord in the temple: "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." That of Peter on the discovery of Christ's divinity in the fishing boat: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This discovery the first step to Job's exaltation, and the exaltation of any sinner. "He giveth grace to the lowly." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Pride and self-righteousness the greatest hindrances to a man's peace.

2. *Job's silence.* "What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." No plea to offer (chap. xxi. 5; Jud. xviii. 19). A Divinely taught self-knowledge the effectual cure of a murmuring spirit. God's government of his creatures of such a character as to stop the mouth of every objector. A day at hand when every mouth will be shut, and all the world become guilty before God. The immediate result of the Spirit's work in conviction. Examples: The thief upon the Cross; Saul of Tarsus.

3. *His resolution.* "Once have I spoken, but I will not answer," &c. The proof of repentance to resolve not to repeat the offence. "If I have offended, I will not offend any more." "He that confesseth and *forsaketh* his sin shall obtain mercy." "Go and sin no more." Complete and unconditional surrender, the aim of the Holy Ghost in the sinner's conviction. Note—Job's sin that of his *lips*, and especially in relation to *God*. Sins of the lips to be repented of as well as sins of the life. Unbecoming thoughts and words in regard to God at least as punishable as injustice towards our neighbour. "Uprightings of judgment towards God as much a duty as uprightness of conduct towards man."—*Kitto.*

III. The Almighty's Challenge. Verses 6—14.—"Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said: Gird up thy loins now like a man (a hero or mighty man, as thou imaginest thyself to be—spoken in irony): I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment (judicial sentence, or justice in governing the world)? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayst be righteous (in order to establish thy innocence—which Job appeared on the point of doing)? Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with

a voice like Him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, and array thyself [like a God] with glory and beauty. Cast abroad (manifest on every side, or dart forth as lightnings) the rage (or overflowings) of of thy wrath [against the ungodly for their destruction]: and behold [with a withering glance] every one that is proud, and abase him. Look [with omniscient eye from the throne of the universe] on every one that is proud, and bring him low (by the infliction of condign punishment, and for the manifestation of thy power and justice); and tread down the wicked in their place (on the spot, however high in power and station). Hide them in the dust [of the grave], and bind their faces in secret (without public process, or in the darkness of a prison, like so many doomed malefactors—Est., vii. 8). Then will I also [as well as others] confess unto thee [with praise], that thine own right hand can save thee."

The Almighty's address from the storm-cloud renewed, not to explain and remove the mysteries in His providential dealings, for which there will be time enough hereafter, but still to further convince Job of his error in questioning the Divine justice, and more fully to humble him, by the exhibition of His own almightiness and man's littleness. From the challenge in the above section, observe—

1. The spirit and tendency of all murmurings against God's dealings with us is to "disannul" His decisions, and to maintain our own righteousnes as deserving better treatment.

2. Discontent and rebellion against the Divine procedure is virtually to "contend" with God, and enter the lists with the Almighty. "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe unto the man that striveth with his Maker." A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. "Who can abide when once he is angry." The wrath of a king like the roaring of a lion; what then the wrath of a God? The sinner must either submit by grace or be subdued by judgment. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

4. Pride the object of God's special displeasure. The sin of fallen angels.

5. Every sinner "beheld" by the omniscient eye of the Almighty. "No darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

6. The proudest to be one day "brought low." Proud sinners humbled either in mercy or judgment. Those happy who willingly humble themselves before God, before they are *unwillingly* humbled *by* Him.

7. *Thorough humiliation and self-abasement required, in order to the reception of full salvation and spiritual comfort.* Job for a time only partially humbled. The ploughshare of conviction to be driven deeper into his soul, before the seed of Divine consolation is cast into it. The knife to be still further applied, before the wound is finally bound up. God's kindness seen in thoroughly humbling the saint as well as the sinner. A crowning blessing, to be divested of the last remains of pride and self-righteousness. God empties in order to fill; humbles in order to exalt.

8. *The tendency of fallen humanity always to save itself.* The essence of all infidelity, Pharisaism, and self-righteousness. The spirit of Cain with his offering of first fruits, in contrast with that of Abel with his bleeding lamb. The Pharisee in the temple, with his—"God, I thank thee I am not as other men;" in contrast with the Publican and his —"God be merciful to me a sinner." Self-salvation the aim of most of the religion in the world, whether Pagan, Mahometan, Jewish, or Christian. Much of the religion of the cloister as well as of the synagogue. Penances, prayers, almsgivings, and so-called good works, often only so many different forms of self-salvation. Self-salvation usually the first attempt of an awakened sinner. Salvation by self the great impediment to salvation by Christ.

9. *Attempts to save ourselves only cured by the discovery of our own weakness.* To save ourselves implies a power nothing less than Divine. To be our own Saviour we must possess the attributes of Deity. The Saviour of humanity, when fallen, must be God as truly as the Creator of humanity itself. "God our Saviour"—two ideas necessarily connected. Salvation includes—(1) Satisfaction to Divine justice for sin; (2) Regeneration or the renewal of a sinful nature. Satisfaction for sin, which deserves endless death, only to be made by one possessing infinite dignity. Regeneration, or the creation of a new and holy nature in a fallen man, the work of a Divine power. The power required to save ourselves, that which can punish sin anywhere and banish it from the world. The sinner made to see his inability, in order to abandon his attempts at self-salvation, and to cast himself entirely on God the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The glory of the Gospel, that it reveals a Divine power put forth for man's salvation; and actually put forth in the case of all who believe it. Man's inability to save himself the ground of Christ's redemption. To exhibit that inability one of the objects of this book. "God, and not man, the sinner's Saviour—the substance of all revelation." —*Townsend*

IV. Description of Behemoth. Verses

15—24.—"Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee (or in thy neighbourhood); he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel (or muscles) of his belly. He moveth (*Marg.*, "setteth up") his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones (or thighs) are wrapped together (or interlaced). His bones are as strong pieces (or tubes) of brass (or copper); his bones (a different word from the preceding—probably a Syriac or Chaldaic one, and rather denoting the larger bones—his limbs) are like bars of iron. He is [in bulk and strength] the chief of the ways (or works) of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach him (or, 'hath given to him his sword'—the weapon—probably his hooked teeth or tusks, with which he might defend himself and attack others, but which he only uses in mowing down the grass for his food). Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play (the animal harmless and herbivorous, notwithstanding his sword). He lieth under the shady trees (or lotuses), in the covert of the reed and fens (or marshes abounding on the banks of the Nile). The shady trees (or lotuses) cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river (or a 'river rages' or overflows its banks), and [he] hasteth not (to escape from fear of the consequences): he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan with his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes (or 'will any take him before his eyes?'—instead of using stratagem): his nose pierceth through snares" (or, "will any pierce his nose with hooks?"—as 2 Kings xix. 28; Ezekiel xxxviii. 4).

Uncertain what animal, if any one in particular, is intended by the description. The name "Behemoth," as a Hebrew word, simply denotes "beasts," or viewed as the plural of majesty, "the beast." So rendered in some of the ancient versions. The word, however, thought by some to be rather the Hebrew form of an Egyptian name for the animal, viz., *P-ehe-moth*, or the water-ox. The *elephant* generally understood by the older commentators to be the animal intended. Modern interpreters, however, decidedly in favour of the *hippopotamus*, or river-horse. The description believed to agree better with the latter; while the hippopotamus, being an inhabitant of the Nile and its banks, was much more likely to be familiary known to the patriarch and the poet than the elephant.

Both the elephant and the hippopotamus belong to the class of animals termed by naturalists *Pachydermata*, or thick-skinned. The elephant comprehends the largest of the living terrestrial animals that suckle their young. Its food is strictly vegetable. It is of a mild disposition, and lives in herds, which are conducted by old males. Those of the present day clothed with a rough skin, nearly destitute of hair. Are only found in the torrid zone of the eastern continents; the Indian elephant being found from the Indus to the Eastern Ocean, and in the large islands of the south of India; and the African one, from Senegal to the Cape of Good Hope. The African elephant not now tamed, although the Carthaginians appear to have employed it in the same way that the inhabitants of India do theirs. The hippopotamus has a very massive and naked body, with very short legs, so that the belly reaches to the ground, an enormous head, and a short tail. It lives in rivers and their neighbourhood, feeding on roots and other vegetable substances, and exhibits much ferocity and stupidity. Now confined to the rivers of the middle and south of Africa.—*Cuvier.*

The description apparently agreeing in every particular neither with the elephant nor the hippopotamus, the animal has been conjectured by some to be a now extinct genus; and by others to be rather a poetical personification of the great pachydermata—the idea of the hippopotamus being predominant. Extinct species of this class of animals found in a fossil condition. The great *mastodon* the type of the elephant, though of a different species—the principal distinction being in the shape and structure of the teeth; while the mastodon also possessed short tusks in its lower, in addition to those in its upper, jaw. This animal equalled the elephant in size, but with still heavier proportions. Its remains found in a wonderful state of preservation both in America and the Eastern Continent. The skeleton of one, almost entire, found in the valley of the Missouri, now to be seen in the British Museum. The animal supposed to have been more an aquatic, or swamp-hunting, quadruped than the elephant. A *mammoth*—a more recent animal of the same class—measuring from the fore-part of the skull to the end of the tail sixteen feet four inches, and twelve feet in height, discovered in Siberia in 1801, imbedded in ice, with its flesh, skin, and hair as perfect as if recently dead. The remains of another found, which is supposed to have been twenty-five feet high and sixty feet in length. Gigantic elephants, of nearly twice the bulk of the largest elephant of Africa or Ceylon, believed by Professor Owen, from the abundance of their remains, to have roamed in herds over the British Islands in the period immediately before the creation of man. The fossil remains of an animal

discovered in the gypsum quarries of Paris and other parts of France, to which has been given the name *Palæotherium*, or the 'ancient beast,' and which seems to have combined the characters of the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the horse, the pig, and the camel; while its external appearance, as restored by Cuvier, approaches more nearly to that of the tapir. The animal supposed to have lived in marshy ground, and to have fed on the roots and stems of trees.

The Almighty's object in the description of Behemoth, to present to Job, in this gigantic and powerful animal, an evidence of His Divine power; and at the same time to teach him his own littleness, and the presumption of thinking to dispute with his Maker, or of questioning the justice of His procedure. The Creator, Preserver, and Governor of such creatures must be one who possesses sufficient power, wisdom, and rectitude to govern the world.

Observe—(1) Not merely do the heavens and the firmament over our head declare the glory of God, but every creature which His hands have made. The huge mammoth points to the irresistibleness of His power, while the almost invisible animalcule tells of the universality of His Providential care. (2) *The largest, as well as the least, of His creatures dependent on, and provided for by, the Creator.* "He giveth the beast his food." How much more will He care and provide for His own children made after His image! He Who constantly feeds the gigantic monsters of the land and sea can be at no loss to supply the wants of His trusting people. The happiness of believers that they are able to testify with David: "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

CHAPTER XLI.

JEHOVAH'S SECOND ADDRESS CONTINUED.

Nearly the whole of the chapter occupied with the description of "Leviathan." The section remarkable for its grandeur and sublimity. The idea of terribleness and power conveyed in a variety of striking particulars. The image of a formidable monster vividly placed before our eyes. The details naturally often obscure. The most extended description in the Almighty's address and in the whole book. The object to exhibit the might and majesty of the Creator. "Such a power of description as to constitute in my mind an evidence of its inspiration."—*Dr. Chalmers.*

I. The description itself. May be divided under various heads.

1. The creature's *fierceness and indomitableness.* Verses 1—10.—"Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down (or, 'press down his tongue with a rein,' or perhaps 'a fishing-line')? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn (*i.e.*, an iron hook resembling one—so as to lead him about as thou wilt, like other wild beasts, as Ezek. xxix 4; Is. xxxvii. 29). Will he make many supplications unto thee [to spare him]? Will he speak soft words [of persuasion] unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens (as a plaything for thy little girls)? Shall the companions (the partners employed in taking him) make a banquet of (or on account of) him (after taking and killing him, or, will they 'make a bargain over him,' or 'dig pits for him, in order to take him)? Shall they part him among the merchants (to be sold like other animals)? Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? Lay thine hand upon him; remember the battle [which thou hast rashly entered on], do no more (—do not, or thou wilt not, repeat it). Behold, the hope of him (of taking him, or overcoming him) is in vain (will be disappointed). Shall not one be cast down [with terror] even at the sight of him. None is so fierce that dare stir him up" (or awake him when sleeping).

2. *His powerful structure and terrible aspect.* Verses 12—24.—"I will not conceal his parts (or members), nor his power, nor his comely proportions (or, 'the grace of his array'). Who can discover the face of his garment (strip off his skin or the scales that cover it)? or who can come to him with his double bridle (or, 'enter into the doubling of his jaws,' or his double row of teeth)? Who can open the doors of his face?—His teeth are terrible round about (or, 'the circuits of his teeth are a terror'). His scales (*Marg.*, 'the strong pieces of his shields,' *i.e.*, his strong shields or scales) are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal (or, 'as a close seal'—a seal sticking closely to the material on which it is im-

pressed). One is so near to another that no air can come between them; they are joined one to another; they stick together that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning (as he lifts his head above the water.) Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out (expressive of his hot fiery breath). Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals (live burning coals), and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth (lodgeth) strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him (*Marg.*, 'rejoiceth;' or 'terror danceth before him'—a bold personification, indicating the terror and dismay occasioned by his appearance). The flakes (or pendulous parts) of his flesh are joined together; they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone (or 'as the lower millstone')."

3. *His invincibleness and invulnerableness.* Verses 25—29.—"When he raiseth up himself (out of the water) the mighty are afraid; by reason of breakings (which he makes while plunging in the water, or 'from the destruction' which his appearance threatens, or the 'terror' which it causes) they purify themselves (or lose their recollection—are bewildered). The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold (or stand): the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon (coat of mail, or perhaps the javelin). He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass (or the brazen weapon) as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; slingstones are turned with him into stubble. Darts (or clubs) are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear."

4. *His habits, motion, and supremacy among beasts.* Verses 30—34.—"Sharp stones are under him (or, 'his lower parts are sharp potsherds'—the scales on his belly resembling such); he spreadeth sharp pointed things (or, 'a threshing cart,'—his sharp spikes resembling the teeth of one) upon the mire (*i.e.*, when he moves upon his belly, whether on the soft shore or on the bed of the river. He maketh the deep (the water in which he mostly lives—whether sea, lake, or river) to boil like a pot (from the agitation which he causes); he maketh the sea (or river, to which the term is also applied) like a pot of ointment (seething on the fire, and emitting a smell which that of the crocodile is said to resemble). He maketh a path to shine after him (like the phosphorescent light sometimes produced by the rapid motion of a ship); one would think the deep to be hoary (from the white froth and foam which the creature occasions by his motions). Upon earth there is not his like (or 'any dominion' to which he is subject), who is made without fear [of any assailant]. He beholdeth all high things (looks down upon the loftiest creature with disdain; or 'terrifies every boaster'); he is king (holds supremacy) over all the children of pride" (or, 'ferocity'—all proud ferocious animals, such as the lion and other beasts of prey).

II. The creature described. Opinions various. According to the Greek translation used by the Apostles, a *dragon*. With some a sea-monster. By almost all the old commentators, understood to be the *whale*, as in Ps. civ. 26. Now generally believed to be the *crocodile*. The name apparently denoting the *twisting* or *folding* one, and so applicable either to a serpent or a crocodile. The description more suitable to the crocodile than any other known living animal. The crocodile also, as an inhabitant of the Nile, likely to be known both to Job and the writer of the book. The more likely to be the crocodile as connected with Behemoth; if that creature be supposed to be the hippopotamus, also a native of that river. A familiarity with Egypt and its productions on the part of the writer, apparently indicated by the poem.

The animal intended, however, conjectured by some to be one of an extinct species of the order of Saurians, the description corresponding in all particulars neither to the whale nor the crocodile. By others, the description thought to be rather, like that of Behemoth, a poetical generalization; in this case, for all monsters of the whale, serpent, or lizard tribes, the idea of the crocodile being the predominant one.

The crocodile, an amphibious animal of the order of Saurians, has a single range of pointed teeth in each jaw. The tongue fleshy, flat, and adhering close to the edges of the jaws a circumstance which induced the ancients to believe that the animal was destitute of a tongue altogether. The back and tail covered with very stout, large, square scales or plates, so thick as easily to repel a musket ball, those on the belly being smooth and thin. The crocodile inhabits rivers and lakes, and is extremely ferocious and carnivorous. Found nearly twenty feet long and five feet in circumference.

Another family of the same order is the *dragon* (draco, *Linnæus*), supposed by some to be the Leviathan, which is also mentioned in Is. xxvii. as "the dragon that is in the sea." The dragon of the naturalists distinguished from all other animals of the order, by their first six false ribs; which, extending outwards

in a straight line, and supporting a production of the skin, form a kind of wing, like that of a bat, but not connected with the four feet; and having sufficient power to enable them to leap from one branch to another, but not to rise, like a bird, into the air. They are completely covered with scales. The tongue fleshy and somewhat extensive; while a long pointed dewlap hangs under their throats. To this tribe of Saurians probably belongs the long-extinct reptile only found in a fossil state, and known by the name of *Pterodactylus*. This animal of a bygone world had a short tail, an extremely long neck, and a very large head. The jaws armed with equal and pointed teeth. The second toe of the fore foot so elongated as to make the foot double the length of the trunk, and probably serving to support some membrane which enabled the animal to fly. Enormous eyes enabled it to see in the dark twilight, while its jaws were furnished with sixty pointed teeth. Some specimens must have had a spread of wing exceeding sixteen feet. The Greek term *draco*, or dragon, generally used to designate a large serpent; while some ancient Greek writers speak of flying dragons. Some of them speak also of dragons with a crest or beard; which can only apply to the *Iguanas*, properly so called, and belonging to the same family as the dragons. In these the head is covered with plates, and the body and tail with scales; while along the entire length of the back is a range of spines, or rather recurved, compressed, and pointed scales; and under the throat is a pendant compressed dewlap, whose edge is supported by a cartilaginious process of the hyoid bone. Each jaw is surrounded with a row of teeth, while two small rows are on the posterior edge of the palate. An iguana, common in South America and the West Indies, measures about five feet in length. To the same family belongs the enormous fossil reptile known as the *Iguanodon*, a monstrous lizard, sixty or seventy feet long; its form resembling the iguana of the West Indies, with the addition of a horn, situated like that of the rhinoceros, and of about the same size.

Other monstrous animals, living at the same period, and found as fossils, were equally or even more terrific in appearance. The *hylosaurus*, or forest-lizard, had a row of scaly fringes on its back seventeen inches long, which it had the power of erecting when advancing to attack its enemy or to seize its prey. The *megalosaurus* exhibited the structure of the crocodile and monitor, from forty to fifty feet in length. The *plesiosaurus* united to the head of the lizard, the teeth of the crocodile, a neck of enormous length resembling the body of a serpent, with a body and tail of the proportions of an ordinary quadruped, and the paddles of a whale. The *ichthyosaurus*, or fish-lizard, was the ruling monster of the waters. In some of these the eye must have been twelve inches long and nine broad, protected by scales. The jaws, armed with one hundred and eighty conical teeth, were, in the larger species, six feet long, the whole length of the animal being thirty feet.

III. The Lessons from the Description.

1. *The resistless power and universal dominion of the Almighty.* This, the lesson mainly intended to be taught the patriarch himself. Indicated expressly by the Almighty in verses 10, 11: "None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? Who hath prevented me (in rendering any service, so as to lay me under an obligation to him), that I should repay him? (words referred to by the Apostle in Rom. xi. 35). Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine." The inference obvious: If you are unable to stand before or resist any of these monsters of the land or sea, how can you stand before me, from whom they all live, and move, and have their being? How vain to think to lay Him under obligation to us, to whom all creatures, from the least to the greatest, belong as His own property, and on whom they depend every moment for existence! Hence—(1) *Humility and submission to God, with confidence in the justice of His government and the wisdom of His providential dealings, man's duty in all circumstances.* The Creator, Possessor, and Ruler of universal nature may well be believed to be infinite in His perfections, and trusted in as righteous, wise, and good in all His procedure. (2) *Terrible to have Him for a foe to whom the mightiest monsters of sea or land belong, as only an insignificant portion of His creatures.* "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Unspeakably blessed to have Him for our friend. Our highest wisdom to secure, without delay, a personal interest in His favour and friendship, through the redemption and mediation of His Son Jesus Christ.

2. *The mysterious sovereignty of God in the formation of His creatures.* The same Divine hand the former of the harmless dove and the terrible dragon. The Creator of the lamb pleased also to produce the Leviathan. The useful ox and the destructive crocodile made to inhabit the same locality. Why God should have formed creatures of such terrible aspect and ferocious dispositions,

clothed them with such impenetrable armour, and furnished them with such destructive weapons,—among the secrets of His Divine wisdom. All things made for Himself; even the wicked for the day of evil. For His pleasure all things are, and were created. No creature but made to show forth, in some way or other, the glory of His Divine perfections, and to secure some purpose or other in His all-comprehensive government. Variety everywhere displayed in the works of the Creator's hands. That variety directed by infinite wisdom, goodness, and justice.

3. *God's works of creation worthy of all admiration.* His works such as to bear to be taken to pieces and viewed in detail. The better known, the more admired. Exhibited by God himself for our admiration. "I will not conceal his parts." The crocodile, or the dragon, as truly worthy of admiration as the noble war-horse. Job pointed to the Leviathan as an object of beauty and gracefulness as well as strength and power. If God sees beauty in the crocodile, what beauty then in many of His other works! Objects in creation doubtless viewed otherwise by God, angels, and unfallen men, than they are by creatures in a state of rebellion against their Creator, and, therefore, with their faculties impaired, and themselves at enmity with the rest of creation. Things viewed with terror by the consciously guilty and condemned, which might otherwise have only excited admiration. God's standard of beauty the true one. What God views with admiration and complacency certain to be viewed by His children with the same feelings, but for the effects of sin in their nature. Those effects entirely removed in a better state, when the universal song will be, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all Thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. xv. 3). Interesting to mark in the above section the delighted contemplation by God on His own works. "Stamps a warrant of sacredness on our tasteful admiration of them."—*Dr. Chalmers.*

4. *The fact and effects of the fall seen in man's relation to the creatures.* Man originally made to have dominion over all the terrestrial works of the Creator's hands. Man fitted for such dominion, as created in his Maker's image. That dominion an obvious part of his natural right as a child of God. His intellectual nature, placing him so immensely above the brute creation, such as to warrant the expectation of it. That dominion enjoyed by Adam in a state of innocence, when he gave names to all the creatures. Naturally and justly forfeited, however, and lost by man's rebellion against his Creator. Rebellion justly followed by attainder. Rights naturally forfeited by rebellion against an earthly sovereign. Hence, but for sin, the crocodile and the tiger as harmless to man, and as much under his subjection, as the cow or the dog. The dominion forfeited by the first Adam, regained and restored by the second. Christ, the Second Man, without sin, made Ruler over all the creatures as man's representative. Was in the wilderness forty days with the wild beasts, as Adam was with them in Paradise (Mark i. 13). The lions at the feet of Daniel in the den, a specimen of what may be "in the regeneration." All things reconciled in Christ. The members made partakers with the Head in the restored rule of creation. In the kingdom of Messiah, a state of things indicated which will probably have its external and physical, as well as its internal and spiritual, aspect: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp," &c. (Isa. xi. 6—9).

5. *An emblem afforded of the great adversary of man.* That adversary named in Scripture, "the Dragon, that Old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" (Rev. xx. 2). Under the figure of Leviathan, "the dragon that is in the sea," mention made by the prophet (Isaiah xxvii. 1) of some powerful adversary and oppressor of the Church and people of God; whom the Lord, when he comes "out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity," will punish and slay "with his sore and great and strong sword." Perhaps some human oppressor of the Church thus indicated, as Pharaoh, the great enemy of Israel, is spoken of under the same figure (Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14; Is. li. 9). The king of Egypt expressly called "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers" (Ezek. xxix. 3). These, however, exhibited as types of the great oppressor of man, called by Peter, "Your adversary, the devil, [that] goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The chosen form of that adversary, in his first and successful attempt upon the human race, that of a serpent. The Leviathan, as some kind of dragon, very generally understood by early Christian writers as allegorically representing the dragon and old serpent of the Revelation. Parts of the description impressively applicable to our great adversary, and very frequently employed by evangelical writers and preachers as illustrative of his character. Leviathan may be viewed as an emblem of Satan in respect to—(1) *His loftiness and dignity as a creature.* Satan a

fallen angel; probably one of the highest, if not the very highest of the heavenly hierarchy. (2) *His fierceness and cruelty.* Satan a murderer from the beginning, sparing neither age, sex, nor condition. (3) *His power of inflicting mischief and working destruction.* One of Satan's names Apollyon or Abaddon, viz., the Destroyer. (4) *The difficulty of overcoming him.* Satan not to be overcome by any mere human effort. The strong man armed who is only to be evercome by one stronger than he (Luke xi. 21). (5) *The universality of his sway.* Satan the god and prince of this world; the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; the ruler of the darkness of this world. Keeps his palace (our fallen race), and has his goods in peace until the stronger than he—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mighty God, or God the Champion (Is. ix. 6)—comes upon him, overcomes him, and "divideth the spoils" (Luke xi. 22). "He is so strong that if all of us should combine against him, he would laugh at us, as Leviathan 'laugheth at the shaking of a spear.' . . . He is well armed at every point, and he knows how to arm his slave, the sinner, too; he will plate him from head to foot with mail, and put weapons into his hand against which the puny might of Gospel ministers and human conscience can never prevail. Prejudice, ignorance, evil education—all these are the chain-armour with which Satan girds himself. A hard heart is the impenetrable breastplate which this evil spirit wears; a seared conscience becomes to him like greaves of brass; habitude in sin is a helmet of iron. The demon who possesses men is not to be wounded by our artillery."—*Metropolitan Pulpit*, Feb. 5, 1865. Bunyan's description of Apollyon, partly taken from that of Leviathan in the text. "Now the monster was hideous to behold: he was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride); he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." But one conqueror of the great Leviathan—the Lord Jesus Christ; who took our nature, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). But one weapon by which he can be wounded, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. vi. 17). "I have written unto young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John ii. 14).

CHAPTER XLII.

THIRD GREAT DIVISION OF THE POEM.—THE CONCLUSION.

The Almighty's address immediately followed by the catastrophe of the poem,—the repentance of Job, and the consequent change of his condition. What the three friends, and Elihu himself, had failed to do, Jehovah's voice at once accomplishes. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." No explanation given by the Almighty of the mystery of Job's sufferings, and those of other good men, or of the prosperity of the ungodly in this world. By the mere exhibition of the Divine perfections, objection is silenced and discontent relieved; while the objector confesses his guilt, and deeply humbles himself on account of his presumption and folly.

From verse seven to the end, the narrative is given in prose, in the same style as the introduction in the first two chapters. The chapter stands connected with the preceding parts of the book, as the capital of the magnificent column of which the introduction is the base.

1. Job's Repentance. Verses 1—6.—"Then Job answered the Lord," &c. Repentance the happy fruit of sanctified affliction (Isa. xxvii. 9). Job's repentance expressed in few words. God requires not many words, but much faith. We have—

1. *A believing acknowledgment of God's omnipotence.* Verse 2.—"I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee (*Marg.*, 'no thought of thine can be hindered'; or, 'no purpose is too high for Thee' [to accomplish]." One of Job's errors, apparently, that he had, in his heart at least, doubted God's omnipotence, as if He were unable either to punish the wicked as they deserved, or to deliver His servants out of trouble, or keep them from falling into it. Much of this secret infidelity lurking in the natural heart. Apparently easy and natural to believe that God is almighty and able to "do all things." Easy to profess it, but not so easy to act always upon the belief, and to have our heart and life powerfully influenced by it. The belief of God's almightiness at the bottom of all true religion. The faith that characterized

the worthies of the Old Testament (Heb. xi). Noah believed that God could destroy the world by a flood, and preserve himself and his family by the ark; Abraham, that He could give him a son when Sarah was past child-bearing, and that He could raise that son from the dead; Moses, that He could open a way for Israel through the Red Sea; Joshua, that He could cause the walls of Jericho to fall to the ground; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that He could deliver them from the fiery furnace; Mary, that, without her knowing a man, God could, according to His Word, make her the mother of the promised Saviour. This faith directed, in the New Testament, to Christ. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him: If thou canst *believe*; all things are possible to him that believeth." The Roman centurion commended for believing that Jesus had but to speak the work, where He was, and his servant should be healed. When God speaks, faith—

> "Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries, It shall be done."

Mighty works wrought by means of faith in God's almightiness. The part of such faith to "remove mountains." "Nothing shall be impossible to you." The virtue of faith, that it arms itself "with that omnipotence it trusts." Faith honours God, and God honours it (Rom. iv. 20, 21). Hence, through faith, men "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb. xi. 33, 34). Peace and restfulness of heart the fruit of such faith. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3). The character of unbelief and infidelity that it doubts God's omnipotence. "If the Lord should open windows in heaven might this thing be." "Why should it be thought an incredible thing, that God should raise the dead?"

God's "thoughts" only known to us as they are revealed by Him. When known, faith rests assured that they shall be accomplished; however unlikely and impossible they may appear to carnal reason. His "thoughts" or purposes respect—(1) Himself; (2) His Son, Jesus Christ; (3) His Church as a whole; (4) Each individual member of that Church; (5) The creation at large (Rom. viii. 21). His thoughts those of an infinite and eternal Being, who sees the end from the beginning; of one perfect in knowledge, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth. His thoughts the foundation of His procedure, and the plan according to which He acts in Providence.

The front of Job's offending in God's sight, and that of which he has now so deeply to repent,—his unworthy thoughts of God, and especially his unbelief in regard to God's almightiness. Observe—(1) *Grievous sin often in the heart in reference to God, when none may appear in the life in reference to men.* (2) *The cause of bitter repentance to a child of God, to find that he has sinned by indulging unworthy thoughts of his heavenly Father.* (3) *Much of God's Word and works intended to teach His children that He is able to do all things.*

God's *right* as well as *might* probably included in Job's acknowledgment. A maxim in law, that a man can only do what he has a right to do. God not only *can*, but justly *may*, do whatever He pleases. Has a sovereign right over all His creatures. May dispose of them and deal with them as He pleases. Job tempted at times to question this right, or, at least, to doubt whether it was righteously exercised. His language at the commencement of his trials not maintained to the close—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." God's pleasure in regard to His creatures, *always* and *necessarily* only what is right.

2. *Humble acceptance of Divine reproof.* Verse 3.—"Who is he that hideth (or obscureth) counsel (or wisdom) without knowledge (or which is beyond his knowledge)?" Supply: Thou speakest justly; I am that foolish and presumptuous person. Reference to the Almighty's question in chap. xxxviii. 2. Observe—*A truly penitent heart humbly accepts of God's reproof.* An impenitent one rejects it and maintains its own innocence. Israel's sin greatly aggravated in God's sight by saying, when reproved by Him: "I am innocent" (Jer. ii. 35). The fifty-first Psalm David's penitent acceptance of the Divine reproof. Adam's impenitence seen in charging his sin upon Eve, and Eve's in charging hers upon the serpent. Saul, instead of accepting Samuel's reproof, laid his sin upon the people (1 Sam. xv. 1—26. To accept the punishment of our iniquity a proof of a humbled heart (Lev. xxvi. 41.)

3. *Penitent acknowledgment of ignorant and rash speaking.* Verse 3.—"Therefore (this being true of me, I acknowledge that) I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Observe:—(1) *Much of our discontent and murmuring at God's procedure, the result of*

ignorance. Asaph's acknowledgment: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 22). (2) *Most of what we say of God, except as guided by His Spirit, that which we do not understand.* Our words concerning God and His dealings in Providence mostly only the prattling of a child, without its innocence. (3) *God's purposes and ways in Providence, "too wonderful" for us, in our present state, to comprehend.* His thoughts "a great deep." For that deep, human reason unable to furnish a sounding-line. The part of piety and faith to trust God without seeking to trace Him; and to be assured that He does all things well, however much appearances may appear to speak to the contrary. Even God's dealings in reference to ourselves often "too wonderful" for us; much more those dealings in reference to the world at large. His operations in respect to outward and common things often such as we know not; much more those in respect to the renewing of our nature and the salvation of our soul. "As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit (or of the wind, John iii. 8), nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God, who maketh all" (Eccles. xi. 5).

4. *His desire to take the place of a humble inquirer and learner.* Verse 4.—"Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand (or ask) of Thee, and declare (or tell) Thou unto me" [things of which I am so ignorant]. Observe—(1) *The mark of true repentance to desire to know the Lord's will.* "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (2) *Man's proper place, in relation to God and His dealings, that of a learner and inquirer.* (3) *A humble, docile, and childlike spirit, man's true nobility.* The spirit and posture of a child, that of the great philosopher whose name has become inseparably connected with the achievements of modern science. (4). *Enough in God and His ways to give room for inquiry and learning throughout eternity.* Into the mystery of redemption with its glorious results, the angels represented as desiring studiously to look. (5) *Wise to take all our difficulties, whether in regard to Providence or grace, His work or His Word, to God Himself for their solution.* God His own interpreter. Those the most proficient in knowledge who go most to God and His Word for instruction. The disciples to be imitated who inquired in private the meaning of the Master's teaching in public. "What may this parable mean?" (6) *Necessary to be inquirers and learners ourselves in order to be teachers of others.* (7) *In Divine things especially, nothing rightly known except as we are taught of God.* Divine teaching the special bestowment on God's elect, and the first step in a man's salvation (John vi. 45). That teaching imparted to the humble (Matt. xi. 25; Isa. xxviii. 9; Ps. xxv. 9). The privilege of a child of God through life (Ps. xvi. 7; xxxii. 8).

5. *His confession to a different kind of knowledge of God from what he had before.* Verse 5.—"I have heard of thee (or 'heard thee') by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." A perception of God's visible glory probably vouchsafed to Job, as to Isaiah in the temple with similar results (Is. vi. 1—5). An inward and spiritual apprehension of the Divine perfections doubtless mainly intended. This the object of the Almighty's address. Observe—(1) *Knowledge of God and His Son different in different persons, and in the same person at different periods.* That difference twofold: (i) In *degree.* Among believers, some are babes in knowledge, others full-grown men (Heb. v. 13, 14.) All our knowledge here comparatively that of a child (1 Cor. xiii. 9—11. Knowledge obtained by "seeing," much more clear and satisfactory than that by "hearing." Same contrast in chap. xxix. 11; Ps. xlviii. 8. Much of our knowledge here obtained by hearing or report. Hence rather faith than knowledge. Knowledge hereafter rather from seeing than hearing. "They shall see God." "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (ii.) In *kind.* This difference probably, as well as the former, indicated in the contrast. The difference between a believer's knowledge of God and that of an unbeliever, one of kind rather than of degree. The believer *sees* with the eye of faith what before he had only *heard* by report. Knowledge of Divine things by mere report rather that of a blind man in relation to colours. A knowledge of Christ after the flesh the utmost that a man in his unrenewed state can attain to. This superseded in a believer by a spiritual divinely given knowledge (2 Cor. v. 16; Gal. i. 15; Matt. xvi. 17). The testimony of the men of Sychar: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Mere traditional and educational knowledge of Divine things to be distinguished from that which is spiritual and saving. The defectiveness of the former as compared with the latter exhibited in Job's case. The invitation of the Gospel: "Come and see." "Taste and see that the Lord is good." The knowledge of the believer an experimental one,—not only a hearing, but a

tasting of the salvation of God. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter ii. 3). (2) *Much of God's dealing with believers and others, with a view to bring them to an experimental knowledge of Himself and His truth.* This the object of His dealings with Job. "*Now* mine eye seeth thee." God often pleased to reveal Himself most in the rebukes of His providence. "I will allure her into the wilderness, and will speak comfortably to her" (*Marg.*, 'to her heart'—in an effectual way of instruction). Spiritual knowledge often one of the most blessed fruits of sanctified affliction. Often more knowledge of Divine things gained in one month or one week on a sick bed than in many years of previous experience. Such teaching one of the ends of affliction. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law" (Ps. xciv. 12). (3) *A good man's knowledge of God and Divine things progressive.* The hearing of God to conduct to the seeing of Him. The path of the just like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Knowledge under Divine teaching like the river in Ezekiel's vision—first up to the ankles, then the knees, then the loins, and at last a river to swim in. Saving knowledge like the restored sight of the blind man in the Gospel—first men seen as trees walking, then all things seen clearly. The greatest increase of knowledge awaiting the believer in another world. "Now I know in part (in fragments or piecemeal), but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). (4) *Danger of stopping short of a spiritual and experimental knowledge of God and Divine things.* Job's "*now*" to be desired, whatever it may cost us. Paul's resolution—"Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him [so] no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). Professing Christians especially counselled by Christ to come to Him for the eye-salve of His Spirit, that they may anoint their eyes and see (Rev. iii. 18.

6. *His self-abhorrence, as the result of his perception of the Divine perfections.* Verse 6.—"Wherefore I abhor myself (or, 'I loath [my conduct and language]')." Observe—(1) The result of the Divine manifestation and address *immediate.* But little time required for the Spirit's teaching. Nothing unnatural in sudden conversion. Conviction and conversion the effect of the same teaching as in the case of Job. Other examples of the same suddenness: Isaiah in the temple; Zacchæus; the penitent thief; the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; Saul on the way to Damascus; the Ethiopian eunuch; the jailor at Philippi, &c. (2) Job's language *the effect of the apprehension of the Divine character and perfections.* The natural effect of such apprehension is the perception of the enormity of all sin, and the discovery of our own depravity in particular — more especially of our sinful thoughts and words in respect to God and His dealings with us. Similar effect in the case of Isaiah in the temple: "Woe is me, for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. vi. 5). Same effect on Peter at the miraculous draught of fishes: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." That in ourselves and others which needs only to be rightly known to be abhorred.

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

That is, to be seen as Job saw it,—in the light of God's character and perfections. All sin in itself filthy and abominable. Probably seen to be such even by the lost,—"an abhorring to all flesh." The right abhorrence of sin and of ourselves, that accompanied with true repentance. Judas abhorred himself, and committed suicide. (3) *Self-abhorrence a part of true repentance* The pardoned and accepted penitent is ashamed and loathes himself for his sins (Ezek. xvi. 60—63; xxxvi. 25—32). Self-abhorrence a part of the believer's sweetest experience, and will always accompany it. (4) *Sin infinitely loathsome to a holy God.* Sin seen by God exactly as it is. If loathsome to Job, still infected with it, how much more to his spotless Creator! Hence (i.) The long-suffering patience and forbearance of God, in bearing with a world of sinners. (ii.) The riches of His grace in providing for such loathsome creatures a Saviour and a substitute in the person of His own Son, and in taking them again for His own children. (iii.) The mightiness and preciousness of the Holy Spirit's operation, that renews and sanctifies the objects of the Divine abhorrence. (5) *Not the least favourable sign when we are most loathsome in our own eyes.* Cannot be worst with us when we see ourselves as God sees us. We are often worst when we think ourselves best. The Pharisee in the temple contrasted with the Publican. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," a better sign than —"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." Job most commended by God when most loathed by himself. The believer most beautiful in God's eyes when blackest in his own (Cant. i. 5). (6) *Self-abhorrence a benefit to ourselves.* Has the

tendency—(i.) To keep us from pride. (ii.) To render us forbearing and compassionate towards others. (iii.) To prepare us to act as intercessors on behalf of fellow-sinners. Job not directed to pray for his three friends till he was brought to abhor himself.

7. *His declaration of repentance and humiliation.* Verse 6.—"I repent in dust and ashes"—that is, sitting in them—a token of humiliation and repentance (Job. ii. 8; Luke x. 13). The catastrophe of the poem in these last words of Job. Probably one of the secret purposes of God in permitting the temptation and trials. Not intimated at the first; but "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." One of God's objects in all the temptations and sufferings of his children, their perfection. That perfection connected with their self-humiliation and repentance (Ezek. xvi. 61—63; xxxvi. 31). The aim of God in His dealings with His people, to humble them in order to their exaltation—to empty in order to fill them (Is. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2). Observe, in regard to

Repentance—

1. *The Nature of it.* A change of mind—of views, feelings, dispositions; with a corresponding change of conduct. This change mainly in relation to God: hence, "repentance toward God." Job's repentance *inward*, but manifesting itself *outwardly*, both in his words and actions, negatively and positively. No more murmuring and discontent with his lot. No more unworthy thoughts of God. No more bitterness against his three friends. "Fruits meet for repentance."

2. *The Author of it.* God himself, through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Repentance directed *to* God is a repentance proceeding *from* God. The exercise of it our own; the grace of it, God's. Every good and perfect gift, and true repentance among them, from the Father of lights. "Then hath God granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life." "Peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The Son of God the author of saving repentance equally with the Father. Christ "exalted by the Father's right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and the remission of their sins." The Holy Ghost sent both by the Father and the Son for this purpose. God himself the Author of Job's repentance, when the three friends and Elihu had laboured for it in vain.

3. *The Means of it.* The truth, as exhibited by the Holy Ghost. The exhibition of the truth regarding God and ourselves. The prodigal "came to himself"—had his eyes opened to the truth as to his conduct and condition, as well as to the character of his father, and said: "I will arise and go to my father." Job's repentance after the Divine exhibition of the truth to him regarding God and his own sin. The aim of the Almighty in his prolonged address and the manifestation of Himself. "After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh" (Jer. xxxi. 19). Ministers and preachers directed "in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Repentance and remission of sins to be *preached in Christ's name.* The preaching of Christ as the Father's gift of love to sinners, and as the sinner's Substitute through whom we are invited back to God, one of the most effectual means of producing "repentance unto life."

4. *The Effects of it.* The reception of blessing. Job prepared by his repentance for the turning of his captivity, with all the blessings that followed it. "Repentance unto life." Job further prepared for becoming *a blessing to others.* Only directed to intercede for his friends when he repented himself. Deep personal repentance necessary as a preparation for usefulness to others. Christ's most useful and honoured servants usually those who have been brought through the deepest exercises of self-humiliation and repentance; witness Paul, Luther, John Bunyan. Isaiah's self-abasement and repentance in the temple preparatory to his answering: "Here am I; send me." Peter's commission as a fisher of men preceded by his exclamation: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

II. The Divine Verdict. Verse 7.—"And it was so that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me (*Hebrew*, 'to me;' *Greek Version*, 'before me,'—the controversy viewed as carried on in the presence of the Almighty as umpire, as all controversies should) the thing that is right (solid or true), as my servant Job hath" (*Greek version*, 'against my servant Job'). Eliphaz particularly named in the verdict as having been the first and chief speaker, and probably the oldest and most distinguished of the three friends. Perhaps the others influenced by his sentiments and example. *Responsibility connected with age, position, and attainments,* Job spoken of by the Almighty as "my servant" in presence of the three friends, as before in the presence of Satan and the angels. Observe—(1) *God's judgment of his servants often very*

different from that of men, and even of their fellow-servants. (2) *God never ashamed to acknowledge his faithful servants.* One of the rewards of the faithful servant to be so acknowledged at the last day (Matt. xxv. 21; Rev. iii. 5). (3) *True godliness a thing that stands the fire.* Comes out as it went in, only purer. (4) *God often most pleased with us when we are least pleased with ourselves.* Job now loathing himself, and sitting in ashes. From the verdict itself observe—

1. *All disputes sooner or later settled by God Himself.* A reason for patience and forbearance, meekness and moderation in controversy. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart" (1 Cor. iv. 5). One great lesson of the book to teach us to wait patiently for that day (James v. 7—11). The cause of God's servants sooner or later righted by God Himself. He who has a good and righteous cause may afford to wait.

2. *God's decision often very different from man's expectation.* The decision apparently expected by all but Job to be in favour of the three friends. God's judgment entirely the reverse. Job magnified and the friends mortified. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. x. 18). Job's cause essentially good, though marred by many unbecoming utterances; the friends' cause essentially bad, though supported by many precious and excellent truths.

3. *God's views in regard to individuals and their conduct not to be readily gathered from appearances.* The three friends *seemed* to be enjoying God's favour, and only Job to be lying under His displeasure. Exactly the reverse of the reality. So with Jesus, and the priests and rulers who condemned him. "We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Is. liii. 4). Men often stand differently in God's account from what they do in their own and that of their fellow men. "A light thing to be judged of you or of man's judgment' (1 Cor. iv. 3). God often most angry when there is least appearance of it. May be angry with men for what they are most proud of themselves.

4. *God sometimes displeased with otherwise good men, and those bearing a high character for piety and morality.* Such apparently the character of the three friends. What then the case of men living in constant and open rebellion against Him? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 18).

5. *God angry with men on account of things not rightly and truly spoken.* God's displeasure as truly against sinful words as sinful actions. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 37). The reason—"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Generally, as a man's words are, so is he.

6. *God jealous of his own glory and the character of his servants.* The things not rightly and truly spoken by the three friends were—(1) *In regard to God Himself.* So English version. (2) *In regard to His servant Job.* So Greek version. Their sin in regard to Himself, that they gave an unjust view of God as always visiting the ungodly in this life with tokens of his displeasure, and that the righteous are uniformly free from outward strokes. Their sin against Job the consequence of this—in making Job out to be a great, though perhaps secret, transgressor. The character of God's servants as dear to Him as His own. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. ii. 8). God requires that we not only speak zealously *for* Him, but truthfully *of* Him.

7. *God's anger against sins of omission as well as sins of commission.* "Ye have not spoken," &c. Not enough that we do not speak stoutly and blasphemously *against* Him. Do we speak truly and faithfully *of* him?

III. The Direction. Verses 8, 9.—"Therefore take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly (or 'impute folly to you, so as to punish it), in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job" [in his intercession for his friends, according to verse 8]. The direction twofold, having reference to both parties in the controversy; involving humiliation to the one, and giving honour to the other.

1. In reference to the *three friends.* These directed as penitents to seek pardon and reconciliation with God through Job's mediation. Observe—(1) *God reproves only in order to reconciliation* (2) *Pardon and reconciliation with God possible under a dispensation of mercy.* Our happiness that God's anger against us for sin may be turned away. Unspeakably awful were that anger to be everlasting. Yet this the case

of all who continue impenitent, and who reject the Saviour that God has provided (John iii. 36). (3) *God takes the first step in the matter of a sinner's reconciliation with Him.* Gives direction to Eliphaz about the means of securing it. Our quarrels with God begin on *our* part; reconciliation on *His*. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now then we are ambassadors of Christ as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Cor. v. 19, 20). (4) *With God alone, not only to say whether there should be reconciliation with Him on the part of sinners, but how the reconciliation was to be effected.* "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9). To be reconciled with God we must comply with God's prescription.

The friends directed to *offer sacrifice.* Repentance implied; yet the direction not to *repent* as Job had done, but to *take a burnt-offering.* No reconciliation between God and man without sacrifice. No reconciliation without forgiveness of sin, and no forgiveness without satisfaction to justice, and no satisfaction without sacrifice. Hence all covenants made by God with men accompanied with sacrifices. Animal sacrifices appointed before and under the Law of Moses as the means of reconciliation with God. These only types or figures, for the time, of the true sacrifice, the woman's Seed; the bruising of whose heel by the Serpent in his suffering and death was to take away sin (Gen. iii. 15). Impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should make satisfaction for human transgression. Its object impressively to teach that without shedding of blood and the substitution of life for life, there is no remission (Heb. ix. 18—23). The promise of a Divine-human Saviour and Substitute never to be lost sight of. Every slaughtered victim but pointed to that Substitute.—*Seven* bullocks and *seven* rams here prescribed; to indicate (1) *The heinousness of sin* which is to be atoned for; (2) *The sufficiency of the great Sacrifice* provided to take it away; (3) *The insufficiency of every other.* The same number frequently offered under the law (Lev. xxiii. 18). Observe—*All sin to be at once confessed and taken to the blood of Christ for its forgiveness.* "If we confess our sin," &c. (1 John i. 7, 9). The conscience kept clean and peace maintained by constant confession to God (not to a priest), and faith in the sacrifice offered on Calvary.—The friends to *go to Job with their offering.* Thus expressing both their penitence and their faith. The act humbling to themselves, but honouring to Job. The first last, and the last first. Job had humbled himself before God; they must humble themselves before *him.* Having joined in accusing him, they must join in seeking his mediation. Job *alone* to be regarded in the matter of acceptance; yet the friends to "go" to him. So Christ alone regarded as the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, yet sinners to go to Him in penitence and faith. "To him shall men come; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Is. xlv. 24, 25). Job apparently to officiate as priest in presenting the friends' sacrifices to God. This usually done, *before* the law, by the head of the family or the eldest son; *under* the law, by Aaron and his sons after him, as types for the time being of the great Priest—one not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchizedec, who was at once both priest and king, and made a priest immediately by God himself, without either predecessor or successor in the office. Job here exhibited as another type of the great High Priest, through whom we draw nigh to God.

2. In reference to *Job.* Job directed to "pray" for the friends, and to mediate with God on their behalf, with a view to their pardon and acceptance. In a sinner's reconciliation with God, sacrifice not to be without prayers. As a priest, Job must pray as well as offer the sacrifice for the friends. So Christ, the true Priest of our profession, offered in the midst of this sacrifice on the cross, the prayer: "Father forgive them;" and on the night immediately preceding it, the prayer in the Upper Room—a specimen of the intercession which He is ever making for His people within the veil. In the prayer as well as in the sacrifice offered up by Job, the friends doubtless united. So we are exhorted, "having such an High priest who is passed into the heavens," to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need" (Heb. iv. 16). God's promise in regard to Job—"Him will I accept." *Him,* not you. Him, and you in him, or for his sake. So men accepted with God not in themselves or on their own account, but in Christ and on Christ's account. Believers made "accepted in the Beloved." "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness sake." (Eph. i. 6; Is. xlii. 21). Observe—(1). *Believers, being accepted in Christ, not only find acceptance for themselves in their prayers, but for others also.* The honour put upon Job, that put upon all Christ's members, who in Him are made "kings and priests unto God." (2) *Acceptance with God the thing to be aimed at in all our prayers and services.* Duties not only to be discharged and prayers offered, but their acceptance to be sought and looked for.

(3) *Acceptance certain, where there is obedience to God's commands and faith in His Son.* "Him *will* I accept." Acceptance itself certain—the time and manner of its manifestation with God Himself. Part of the Spirit's work to testify it. Also made known by its effects, and indicated in Providence. God's promise sufficient. (4) *The person to be first accepted, then the prayer or service.* "Him," his *person*, "will I accept." (5) *God's method to accept and bless one man for the sake of another.* So in temporal matters—God blessed Laban for Jacob's sake, and Potiphar for Joseph's sake (Gen. xxx. 27; xxxix. 5). This principle at the foundation of the Gospel and the scheme of redemption. Sinners pardoned, accepted, and blessed on Christ's account,—the whole plan of salvation. The Gospel thus found in Job as elsewhere in the Old Testament. The Scriptures testify of Christ.

Job honoured by being made a priest in behoof of his friends, *after his deep humiliation, his severe suffering, and their proud contemptuous treatment of him.* So with Christ—sufferings first, then "the glory which should follow." So with Christ's members—"If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together." Job *prepared*, by his previous suffering and humiliation, for the honour now put upon him. Much of the painful discipline of God's children doubtless intended to qualify them for the exercise of their priestly office. Believers thus much more able to sympathize with others. "A deep distress hath humanized my soul."—*Wordsworth.* So Christ Himself suffered, that He might be a merciful High Priest. Prosperity, honour, and extensive usefulness, only safe when preceded by humiliation. Christ's most honoured servants usually those who have been most humbled under the mighty hand of God. "Before honour cometh humility." Job thus honoured after his rejection by his friends, a type of Christ exalted at God's right hand, as "a Priest upon His throne," after His rejection by the priests and rulers. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner."

The honour put upon Job, *God's highest testimony in favour of His servant.* The Divine testimony—(1) To his *faith*; (2) To the sincerity of his *repentance*; (3) To the uprightness and excellence of his *general character.* To be a priest and an intercessor for others, implies—(1) Deep consciousness of the evil and demerit of sin which necessitates such an arrangement; (2) High regard for the honour and interests of God, and the claims of His justice and government; (3) Tender compassion and love towards those for whom the duty is exercised; (4) A forgiving spirit towards those who are enemies to ourselves. Believers most Christlike when interceding for others. To pray for ourselves is human; to pray for others, Divine. Job's general character and power as a man of prayer and intercession for others, indicated in the only other passage in the Old Testament where his name occurs. Mentioned as such in connection with Noah and Daniel, in Ezekiel xiv. 14. The privilege and duty of believers in the New Testament to pray for others, and to mediate their reconciliation with God by publishing Christ and persuading men to be reconciled to God through Him (2 Cor. v. 19—21). Only known in eternity how great the blessing derived by the world and individual men from the intercession of faithful and loving believers. In answer to their prayers, sickness removed and life spared; prison doors opened; nations preserved in tranquillity; preachers of the Gospel aided and blessed in their work; sinners awakened and souls saved (Gen. xx. 7, 17; James v. 14—16; Acts xii. 4—7; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; Col. iv. 3, 4; 1 John v. 14—16; James v. 16—20).

Job's praying for his friends an evidence—(1) Of the heartiness of his forgiveness of them; (2) Of the sincerity of his repentance. His prayer the most effectual means of opening their eyes and softening their heart. Ministers often more useful by their prayers than by their preaching, Saul probably impressed more by Stephen's praying than by his disputing.

IV. Job's Deliverance. Verse 10.—"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when (or while) he prayed for his friends." Observe—

1. *The Author of the deliverance.* "The Lord turned," &c. Job's trouble began from Satan's malice; his deliverance, from God's mercy. No mischief done by the serpent, but can be undone by the woman's Seed. God able to deliver from Satan's malice, but Satan not able to hinder God's mercy. God Himself the deliverer both of His Church collectively and of His people individually. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion," &c. (Ps. cxxvi. 1). "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion: and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work" (2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). See also 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. *The Deliverance itself.* "Turned the captivity of Job." His trouble a captivity. His *outward* condition resembling such. Stripped of all his property; separated from his friends; sitting on an ash-heap, as in the mire of a dungeon; his body covered with sores and filth. Strictly a captivity, as being for the time delivered into Satan's

hands, who treated him with all the rigour he was capable of. Bodily affliction and outward trouble perhaps more frequently from Satan than we are aware. "Ought not this woman whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years," &c. (Luke xiii. 16). Job's captivity an *inward*, as well as an outward one. Job, in his affliction, held bound by his own spirit, as well as the spirit of evil. To a child of God, the most real and painful captivity, to be shut out from God's sensible favour and fellowship, and to be shut up in spiritual darkness and desertion. Job's captivity "turned," as being now released both from Satan's hand and his multiplied sufferings, whether external or internal. His disease removed, according to Elihu's teaching (ch. xxxiii. 24, 25). What His servants say in words, God Himself confirms by deeds. His disease probably removed as quickly as it had been inflicted. Diseases often instantaneously removed by the finger of God. Examples: The leprosy of Miriam, Gehazi, and the lepers in the Gospel. God's plaister as broad as Satan's sore. Job now also restored to the light of God's countenance and the sensible enjoyment of His favour and friendship. Also according to Elihu's doctrine (ch. xxxiii. 26). These deliverances and blessings followed by others afterwards narrated: plenty instead of poverty; the affection of friends instead of their alienation; a numerous and happy family instead of a desolate household.

The deliverance of Job a type—(1) Of the deliverance wrought by the Father for Christ, in terminating His sufferings, raising Him from the dead, and exalting Him to His own right hand in glory. (2) Of the deliverance of believers at death. Their departure a release; a harvest of joy after a seed-time of tears; a morning of gladness after a night of weeping. (3) Of the deliverance to be wrought for the Church and for creation at large at the resurrection of the just,—the binding of Satan, the emancipation of the creature from the bondage of corruption, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness."

3. *The Time of the deliverance.* "When he prayed for his friends." Observe—(1) *We are often best promoting our own welfare when praying for that of others.* According to the principles of the Divine government, that we should be most blessed ourselves when most solicitous about the happiness of our fellow-men. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "He that watereth others shall be watered himself." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Selfishness the greatest hindrance to our happiness. The ocean receives the influx of rivers as it exhales its waters into the air. The earth receives rain as it gives its moisture to the plants that grow on it. The clouds are replenished as they distil their treasures on the earth. To seek mercy and deliverance for others often the shortest way of obtaining it ourselves. (2) Job, in experiencing deliverance when praying for his so-called friends (often to him real enemies), typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. His deliverance and exaltation immediately subsequent to His prayer, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

V. Job's increased possessions. Verses 10, 12.—"Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses." The "end of the Lord" now seen, "that the Lord is very pitiful" (James v. 11). God's thoughts towards his suffering people, "thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give them an expected end" (Jer. xxix. 11). Job seen to be right in blessing God both while giving and taking away. God takes away from His own only in order to give more. Every apparent loss to a believer a real gain. As easy with God to give riches as to take them away. His to give power to get wealth, by blessing honest endeavours. Made Jacob rich in spite of all Laban's endeavours to prevent it. Easy with God to restore what either Satan or man may take from us. Observe—(1) *God takes care that none loses by serving Him.* What is lost in God's service is made up with more than compound interest (Matt. xix. 29). God a liberal rewarder. Gave Job not only as much as he had lost, but its double. Raised faithful Joseph from a dungeon to a palace; and, from a slave, made him prime-minister of Egypt. Valentinian lost his tribuneship for Christ, and was ultimately made Emperor. (2) *The faithful believer's latter end always better than his beginning.* Bildad's words true of every believer (chap. viii. 7). A good man's last days and last comforts generally his best. At eventide light. The best wine reserved by God for his obedient children to the last. As yet unknown what He has prepared hereafter for them that love Him (1 Cor. ii. 9). (3) *God able to do more than we either ask or think.* Job only asked to be shown why he was so severely afflicted and wherein he had sinned. God removes the affliction itself, and makes him twice as rich as he was before. Job only thought to remain practisin

repentance in dust and ashes. God not only withdrew him from his ash-heap, but restored him to more than his former dignity and prosperity. (4) *Believers often prepared for greater blessing by previous suffering and humiliation.* Prosperity more difficult to bear than adversity, and requires preparation for it. Job prepared for his great increase of wealth by his previous troubles, and the self-abasement which preceded it. Believers prepared for being glorified with Christ by being made first to suffer with Him. Comfort in the thought that present troubles may be only the preparation for future triumphs. (5) *The history of the Church and the world, as well as of individual believers, foreshadowed in the experience of Job.* The sufferings of the Church and of believers in this present time "not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." The creation itself to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness," to experience a blessing, and yield an abundance, unknown since the entrance of sin (Rom. viii. 18—22; 2 Pet. iii. 13; Ps. lxvii. 4—7).

VI. The changed conduct of friends. Verse 11.—"Then came unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money (*Greek* version, 'an ewe-lamb;' *Latin* version, 'a sheep;' same word used only in Gen. xxxiii. 19, and Josh. xxiv. 32), and every one an ear-ring of gold." This friendly conduct due to the favour of God. Included in the turning of Job's captivity. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,"—much more his friends. Job's relations and acquaintances probably now more influenced by God's hand on *them*, than by the removal of His hand from *him*. God's favour shown to Jacob in turning Esau's heart towards him, and causing Jacob to "see His face as the face of an angel." God's hand formerly recognized by Job in the alienation of some of his friends; now doubtless acknowledged by him in the affection of others. The hearts of men, whether friends or enemies, "in the hand of the Lord, who turneth them whithersoever He will." The former alienation of friends no small ingredient in Job's cup of sorrow. Their present affection no trifling element in his restored happiness. Friendship the wine of life. "Poor is the friendless master of a world." Heaven itself sweetened by the presence of loving friends.

They "did eat bread in his house." No small joy to Job after his long isolation, that, his leprosy being now removed, he could have his friends partaking of a meal with him in his own house. Type of Jesus with His friends around Him at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. So also, after His resurrection, the scattered disciples gathered again to Him, and "ate and drank with Him" during the forty days of His sojourn with them (Acts. x. 41).

The visit one of congratulation as well as condolence. "They bemoaned him and comforted him," &c. Talk of past griefs an enhancement of present joy. Observe—(1) *God gives not only compensation but consolation to His suffering children.* "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. lxvi. 13). God at no more loss for instruments to comfort His children than to correct them. (2) *Consolations come best in God's time.* Satan's malice in keeping back these friends before, now over-ruled for the enhancement of Job's restored happiness. (3) *Patience to have her perfect work.* "The Lord, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle you." The consolation of these friends all the sweeter, now that Job, after the dark night is over, can rejoice in the sunshine of God's favour. Yet Job still a mourner and needing consolation. His hearth still desolate, with neither son nor daughter at his board. No absolute freedom from trouble till we reach the land where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick; and where all tears are wiped away.

They comforted him "over all the Lord had done unto him." God's hand in Job's troubles acknowledged by the friends as well as himself. Observe—(1) God the Author and Dispenser of our trials, whatever the instruments. Safest and best in our trouble to regard the *first* cause, rather than secondary and subordinate ones. God to be acknowledged in all events as ordering all things by his His Providence, even to the fall of a sparrow. Evil, as well as good, from the Lord, however He may please to send it. Acknowledged even by Satan—"Put forth *thine hand* now," &c. (2) *Praise due to God for His grace in sustaining under past troubles, and His mercy in delivering out of them.* These, as well as sending the troubles, among the things which the Lord had done to Job. Such praise to mingle with our consolations. So Jethro, after coming out to meet Moses, praised God on hearing of "all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon

them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them" (Exod. xviii. 8—11). A picture of heaven and the enhancement of its joy.

The friends *brought presents to Job*, according to the custom of the country. These probably intended—(1) To testify their affection and esteem; (2) To contribute to the restoration of his estate. The sincerity of our friendship and affection evinced by what it costs us. The extent of our sympathy with the suffering measured by what, according to our ability, we contribute to their relief.

VII. Job's Second Family. Verses 13—15. "He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren." Children given to Job to take the place of the former ones, and to sooth the sorrow for their removal. Given in the same number and proportion of sex. As easy with God to give children as riches. Observe—(1) *God's compassion and liberality towards His children.* Job to have every loss made up to him, even to his deceased children. God keeps account of His servants' losses, in order to make them up, either here or hereafter. (2) *Pious children not lost but gone before.* The reason why Job's cattle are doubled, but not his children. The former strictly lost, but not the latter. Those dying in the Lord not lost, but hidden from our view. Job's godly children, buried under the ruins of their dwelling, now only waiting to welcome him to the Father's house. All to be received again in body and spirit at the resurrection of the just. His children, therefore, really doubled, as well as his riches—ten with himself on earth, and ten with God in the better country. Precious comfort to pious parents in the death of their infant or believing children. These only separated from them for a time by a thin veil. The star goes out of sight with us only to shine in another hemisphere. Those not lost who are sleeping in Abraham's bosom. Those not to be considered as lost to us who are found to Christ. Those hardly absent who are in their Father's house. Such removals sanctified to believing parents. Children and friends departing in the Lord, only a part of the "plenishing" of our future home, making heaven more home-like. Help to make up the "sublime attractions of the grave." A purifying and elevating influence in the thought, that while a part of us is on earth, another part is glorified in heaven. The fact fitted to turn our natural sorrow into a sacred joy.

"Who could sink and settle to that point
Of selfishness—so senseless who could be,
As long and perseveringly to mourn
For any object of his love, removed
From this unstable wild, if he could fix
A satisfying view upon that state
Of pure, imperishable blessedness
Which reason promises, and Holy Writ
Ensures to all believers?"—*Wordsworth.*

Job, as made the father of a new family after his restoration, a type of Christ after His resurrection and ascension—receiving, as the eternal Father, or Father of eternity, the Gentiles as His children in the place of the Jews, who had previously constituted the covenant family, but who through unbelief were now for a time cut off. "Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been" (Isa. xlix. 20—23). "Instead of the fathers shall be the children."

Job's second daughters distinguished for the beauty of their persons. God not only gave children, but well-favoured ones. An enhancement of the gift. God's gifts to his tried people often come with a special mark of their origin upon them. A beautiful countenance pleasant to look upon. A reflection of the beauty which is in Him who is the sum and source of all beauty. Beauty vain as compared with grace, but in itself no mean gift and a fit accompaniment to a gracious spirit. A shadow or image of the beauty of holiness. The sweetest countenance, that which is lighted up by the inward grace of the Spirit. The beauty of the outward man made prominent in the Old Testament; that of the inward man in the New New Testament females not praised for their beauty, but for their love and good works (Rom. xvi). Christ's second, or Gentile family, given Him after his ascension, distinguished for their spiritual beauty. The Holy Spirit only then given in his fulness. The promise then fulfilled: "Thy people shall be willing (liberal, princely, or free-will offerings) in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness" (Ps. cx. 3).

The names of Job's second daughters recorded. A mark of honour. The names of many of Christ's daughters recorded in the New Testament; those of all of them in the Book of Life (Rom. xvi. 1—15; Phil. iv. 3). The names of Job's daughters significant, and probably given to indicate at once the beauty of their person, and the sweetness of their disposition; as well as to commemorate the mercy of God in his own deliverance. "Jemima" denotes "a dove," or dovelike; but may include in it the idea of "day." "Kezia" is the Cassia, a fragrant spice. "Kerep-happuch" is either "the

Horn of Paint," or "the Inverted Horn;" according to the Greek version, the Horn of Plenty. Thus perhaps Job praised the God of his life for changing his night into day, giving him the oil of joy for mourning, and turning again his captivity as the streams in the south. True piety will not forget God's benefits.

Job's estate divided among his daughters as well as his sons. Indicative—(1) Of his riches; (2) Of the excellent character of his daughters; (3) Of the harmony and love existing in his family. Job's second, no less than his first children, distinguished for their unity and mutual affection. Children a blessing when love unites them to one another, and to God as their common Father. Believing women, as well as men, made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ the Elder Brother. In Christ, neither male nor female, bond nor free (Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11).

Job's Age and Death. Verses 16, 17.—"After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his son's sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days." Observe—

1. *His Age.* His years thought to have been doubled as well as his estate. In this case, seventy years old at the time of his trouble, and two hundred and ten at the time of his death. Thus attained a greater age than either Abraham or Isaac. Hence earlier than either of them, though probably during part of his life contemporary with one, if not both. Corresponds with the internal evidence of the book. To be remembered in reading his speeches. His troubles all the more keenly felt as occurring before he had reached, for that period of the world, the meridian of life. His death not until he had reached, even for that period, a good old age. Length of days a part of wisdom's wages (Prov. iii. 16). Job's short season of trouble and adversity succeeded by a long life of comfort and prosperity. *God a rich rewarder of his faithful servants.* Joseph thirteen years a slave; eighty a prime-minister. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Weeping endureth for a night, joy cometh in the morning of a nightless day. Short toil, long repose: short conflict, endless triumph. A temporary cross, an eternal crown. Every tear of God's faithful servants a seed which shall one day produce a rich harvest of ceaseless joy.

2. *His Experience.* Spared to see not only his children, but his children's children, "even to the fourth generation." The promise of the Old Testament (Ps. cxxviii. 6; Prov. xvii. 6). Mentioned as the happiness of Joseph in Egypt (Gen. l. 23). Job still more abundantly compensated for the loss of his former family. The words of Eliphaz made good in his experience (chap. v. 25). Died, not only old, but "full of days." Satisfied with the days given him, both as to their number and character. Now as willing to die as ever he had been wishful to live. Ready now, like Simeon, to depart in peace, his eyes having seen God's salvation. Had experienced the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; and now, like Jacob, waited for his salvation in a better world. Had, like David, "served his generation by the will of God;" and now ready, like a tired and happy child, to fall asleep. Comes to his grave, as Eliphaz had said, "like a shock of corn, fully ripe." The evening of his days a tranquil sun-down. At eventide light. Typical of millennial blessedness in the evening of the world. A numerous family of the "Everlasting Father," like the drops of dew from the womb of the morning. His children all in holy and happy fellowship. No more falling out of the brethren by the way. No adversary nor evil occurrent. No Canaanite in the house of the Lord. Satan bound, and no more allowed either to deceive the nations or molest the Church.

3. *His Death.* "So Job died." Piety no exemption from death. Till Christ Himself comes, the grave receives the members as well as the Head. Death to Job no king of terrors. The messenger from his Father's house with a—"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord." The good fight fought, the weary warrior only called off from the field. Had already experienced great deliverances, but was now to experience the greatest of all. A king and a priest on earth, Job died, like all believers, to exercise his royal and priestly office in a land never stained with tears, and in a temple never defiled with sin.

FINIS

Notes.

CHAPTER I.

VERSE 5; "*Have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.*" Various opinions as to the meaning, in this passage, of the Hebrew word here rendered "cursed." בֵּרְכוּ (*bērechoo*) the *Piel* (transitive or intensive) form of the verb בָּרַךְ (*bārach*) to kneel, generally meaning to "bless;" *i.e.*, to cause to kneel, such being the usual attitude in receiving a blessing. The word, however, generally believed to have also the opposite meaning of "cursing." So GESENIUS, who compares it with the Arabic ابترك (*ibtaraka*), and the Ethiopic, *bāraka*, both having the opposite meanings of blessing and cursing. 1 Kings xxi. 10, where the same form of the verb occurs, is referred to as a clear case in which it is used with the meaning of *cursing*. The same word which is twice employed by Satan (chap. i. 11; and ii. 5), and once by Job's wife (chap. ii. 9); where it is no doubt used in the same sense as in the verse before us. This use of the word in two opposite senses variously accounted for. LEIGH, in his "Critica Sacra," connects these opposite meanings on the ground that the word expresses what a man ardently wishes or calls for, whether it may be good or evil, salvation or perdition. CAREY, in his "Notes on Job," connects them by observing that both blessing and cursing are acts of religious worship represented by "kneeling," the relation between them being like that of *precor* and *imprecor* in Latin. Others account for this use of the word on the principle of *Euphemism*; blasphemy having been so abhorred by the ancients that they avoided the very term, as the Latins used *sacrum* for *execrandum*. So VATABLUS, DRUSIUS, and COCCEIUS. Perhaps a better way of accounting for these opposite meanings of the word, is that adopted by CODURCUS, who classes it with those verbs in which the *Piel* form gives a *privative* meaning, and so makes it convey an idea the opposite of that originally implied in it. Thus חָטָא (*khata*) to "sin" has its *Piel* form, חִטֵּא (*khitte*), "put away sin," to expiate it or free from it; עָצַם (*'etsem*), a "bone," gives a verb in the piel form עִצֵּם (*'itsem*) to "break the bones." WEMYSS explains this double and opposite meaning on the ground of irony or antiphrasis; "they may have blessed God," *i.e.*, "may have offended Him"(!) The most satisfactory way for the word being used in this sinister sense, and one very generally adopted by modern interpreters, is that of giving it the meaning of "bidding farewell to," and so of "renouncing;" it being customary on parting with a friend, to wish him farewell. So *valere* in Latin and χαίρειν in Greek are known to be used (TERENCE, *Andria* iv. 14; EURIPIDES, *Medea*, 1044). This view of "renouncing" is adopted by SCHULTENS, J. H. MICHAELIS, LOWTH, DE WETTE, &c. HUFNAGEL renders the word "forgotten." EWALD and HIRZEL: "forsaken." ZOCKLER, in LANGE'S Bible-work, observes that it indicates a hostile farewell.

Many, however, prefer to retain the original meaning of blessing, but under various aspects. So AMBROSE, JEROME, AQUINAS. MAYER: Have sinned, and blessed God for their good cheer. COCCEIUS: Have sinned, and blessed God for their success. SANCTIUS: Have sinned in the way they blessed God; viz., being puffed up by their riches and prosperity. BROUGHTON, CARYL, and POOLE: Have blessed God too little, or have lightly regarded Him; thus approaching to the sense of cursing. Some supply a negative particle, or give a negative meaning to the copula (*vav*), as in Ps. ix. 18; Prov. xvii. 26; "have sinned and not blessed God." So CALVIN, GOOD, and SANCTIUS. BOOTHROYD and YOUNG retain the idea of blessing by giving the copula the sense of "though;" "have sinned though they blessed God." Others do the same by rendering אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*) not "God," but "the gods;"—meaning the idols of the heathens or angelic beings; "have sinned and blessed the elohim or gods." So ADAM CLARKE, PARKHURST, and Dr. LEE, who explains by: "Have inclined to idolatrous practices," and refers to Isa. lxvi.

giving the same expression. The word, however, being without the article, would seem to require to be rendered either "God" or simply "god;" and, as SCOTT the translator of Job has observed, no mention is made in the book of any other god or gods than the true one.

The ancient and later versions vary in their way of rendering the word. The SEPTUAGINT, according to the ordinary edition, has: "Have thought evil against God," in which it has been followed by the COPTIC; while the COMPLUTENSION has: "Have blessed God." In the ITALA, or older Latin version, it is: "Have cursed the Lord;" while the VULGATE has: "Have blessed God." The SYRIAC has: "Have mocked." The ARABIC: "Reproached." The CHALDAIC: "Provoked to anger." COVERDALE: "Have been unthankful to God." LUTHER, like the Vulgate: "Have blessed God." MARTIN'S French version: "Have blasphemed God." DIODATI'S Italian: "Have spoken evil of God."

Verse 11. "*And he will curse thee to thy face.*" (*Margin*: "If he curse thee not.") The clause susceptible of a variety of interpretations. The two particles at the commencement אִם לֹא (*im lo*) "if not," variously rendered and understood. By most they are regarded as expressive of an oath, with the rest of the form of imprecation understood; as, "may I perish," or such like; *i.e.*, "if he will not curse thee," &c. So VATABLUS, PISCATOR, HUFNAGEL, and ZÖCKLER, who makes the expression equivalent to "verily." DATHE supplies, "Let me be accounted a liar," *i.e.*, "if he do not curse thee," &c. SCHULTENS thus views the words as expressive of Satan's impudence and contumacy. Others supply "see;" *i.e.*, "if he will not," &c. So CAREY. Some who retain the sense of "blessing" in the verb, render the particles, "if not;" *i.e.*, "if thou do no smite him, then, no doubt, he will bless thee to thy face, or in thy presense." So Dr. LEE, COLEMAN, YOUNG, &c. SANCTIUS, following the Vulgate, renders the verb in the past tense, as expressive of *habit*,—"[See] if he hath not [merely] blessed thee to thy face." *i.e.*, hypocritically. ADAM CLARKE: "He will bless thee (or be pious) according to thy appearances for him." GOOD and BOOTHROYD interrogatively: "Will he still bless thee?" TOWNSEND: "Then he will bless thee in thy presence," as he has hitherto done Job thus to be proved a mercenary worshipper according to either sense of the verb: If thou smite him he will curse thee to thy face; if not, he will still bless thee, but only to thy face. The same meaning of "renouncing," however, probably attached to בֵּרֵךְ (*bērēch*) here as in ver. 5; only, as has been remarked by NOYES and others, the phrase is stronger here, as importing an utter and public renunciation of religion as a vain thing. So SCHULTENS, DATHE, UMBREIT, ROSENMÜLLER, STICKEL, &c. BARTH, in his "Bible Manual," has: "He will renounce or even blaspheme thee to thy face." MERCER: "He will curse thee," *i.e.*, deny thy providence, and say it is vain to serve thee. Similarly POOLE: "He will reproach thy providence." It is well known that the heathen frequently reproach their gods in misfortune: "*Deos atque astra crudelia vocat.*"

CHAPTER II.

VERSE 4. "*Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*" The expression "skin for skin" acknowledged to be a proverbial one. Its precise meaning not so obvious, though its general drift, as used by the Evil One, is sufficiently apparent. The Septuagint and Vulgate translate as we do; the one rendering the preposition by ὑπερ, and the other by *pro*. The Chaldaic has: "Member for member." So BERNARD, who renders the words: "Limb for limb." Martin's French Version has: "Every one will give skin for skin." Some, as PARKHURST and WEMYSS, render the phrase: "Skin after skin." Others, as PINEDA and TIRINUS: "Skin upon skin," *i.e.*, all skins; or, according to POOLE, all outward things. YOUNG translates: "A skin for a skin." The meanings thus reducible to four:—

1. *The skin of another for one's own skin.* So VATABLUS, TIRINUS, SEB. SCHMIDT, MAIER. "Skin," in this view, is regarded by some as equivalent to "body," as in chap. xvi. 15; xviii. 13; xix. 26; like Horace's "*Pelliculam curare jubet.*" So RÖSENMÖLLER and HUFNAGEL. By others it is viewed as equivalent to "life:" what a man holds as dear to him as his skin, *i.e.*, his life, he will give to save his life. So GESENIUS and HUPFELDT, after ORIGEN, who says: "A man will give a skin, which is sold for money, to save his own skin, *i.e.*, his life." Others: Job will give the skin of his cattle, even that of his children, to

save his own. So GREGORY, EPHREM SYRUS, MERCER, PISCATOR, DRUSIUS, NOYES, &c. Like that of Terence: "*Proximus sum egomet mihi.*" In this view, the proverb is explained by what follows.

2. *Like for like*; *i.e.*, any one gives that; men part with anything for a full equivalent. So CODURCUS, HIRZEL, CONANT: Equivalent for equivalent. MAURER: Job may well give up the rest to keep his life. FAUSSET: One thing for another. EWALD: All is subject to barter. UMBREIT: One article is given for another; but life is dearest to all: Job is satisfied so long as he is not obliged to give up *that*. CODURCUS: The origin of the proverb in the general practice of barter, or in the use of animals instead of men in sacrifice. POOLE: Skins or spoils of beasts in early ages the most valuable property men could acquire; hence became the chief representative of property. GOOD and BOOTHROYD: "Skin" an equivalent for riches, furniture, &c. So PINEDA and SCHULTENS. In the expression "skin for skin," GOOD thinks the word issued in two different senses,—property is given for life. COBBIN remarks that probably ransoms used also to be paid in skins. CAREY sees in the proverb a sort of *reductio ad absurdum:* a man will not part with his skin unless you supply him with another; on no terms will he part with his life: hence Job, to save his life, will part with his religion.

3. *Limb for limb*; or, one thing parted with to save the rest: a less noble member will be given up for a nobler one, as an arm for a head. So MENOCHIUS, MUNSTER, A. CLARKE, &c. The view of some of the Fathers: a man will put up his hand to ward off a blow from his eye. So GREGORY, OLYMPIODORUS. Dr. LEE: Men willingly give up a worse thing for a better: hence, much more will a man give up all he has for his life. COCCEIUS: Job can easily afford to part with all while he keeps his life,—his possessions being as it were a skin or covering to his person to protect and warm him: the one of them—the less valuable—he easily lets go to keep the other. So SCHLOTTMANN, DELITZSCH, and ZÖCKLER in Lange, who regards the life to be preserved as not so much the animal or life-function, as the soul which causes and conditions it.

4. *Skin upon skin.* So Dr. THOMAS, in The Homilist: "like—sovereign after sovereign; all the sovereigns a man has," &c.; "skin," equivalent to property; life dearer than all. Job willing to have skin upon skin taken from him to save his life. SCHULTENS remarks that the Arabs call possessions the outer skin—friends and relations the inner one. According to OLSHAUSEN, the meaning is: So long as thou dost not touch his person, he will not attack thee. COLEMAN thinks an allusion is made to the terrific skin-disease with which Satan purposed to afflict Job. CONANT regards the rendering of the copula *vav* before "all" by "yea," as embarrassing the sense, by anticipating the reader's judgment of the relation of the two clauses, and proposes to read it as usual: "*And* all that a man hath," &c. UMBREIT, and after him FAUSSET, would put "skin" and "life" in the two clauses in antithesis to each other, and render the copula "but." So DE WETTE: People give up other things; but they take care of their life—the highest value put upon *that*. According to BARNES, the idea is: If Job was so afflicted as to have his life endangered, he would give up his religion to save it.

VERSE 7. "*Smote Job with sore boils.*" The Septuagint and Vulgate, followed by MARTIN and DIODATI in their French and Italian versions, render the words which describe Job's disease, "a bad or malignant ulcer." The word שְׁחִין (*shekheen*) which we render "boils," derived from a root not used in Hebrew, but appearing in the Arabic سخن (*sakhana*) to be hot, inflamed, fevered. Job's disease, according to GESENIUS, NOYES, and others, a kind of black leprosy, formerly prevailing in Egypt (Deut. xxviii. 27); called *Elephantiasis*, from the skin being covered with black scales, and from the mouth, feet, and legs swelling enormously, while the body becomes emaciated. The disease not attended with great pain, but with much debility of the system, uneasiness, and mental depression. Both Pliny and Lucretius speak of it as a disease peculiar to Egypt; the former calling it, "*Ægypti peculiare malum.*" PISCATOR and CASTALIO render the singular noun collectively "ulcers;" as our English version, "boils." MORUS renders it: An inflammation. VATABLUS: Pustules,—boils from heat, such as were inflicted on Egypt (Exodus ix. 10), and threatened to Israel (Deut. xxviii. 27). GRYNŒUS, after SCHULCENS: An inflammation, of which the ulcers were the effect. ADAM CLARKE queries whether it was not the small-pox. GOOD makes it: Burning ulcerations,—the *baras* of the Arabs. WEMYSS: Foul ulcers. LEE: A burning disease. FRY: A sore ulcer. CAREY: A malignant ulceration,—the disease nearly proving fatal in the case of Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxviii. 1—21); in Job's case, of a very virulent form. The Homilist: One universal inflammation. FAUSSET: A burning sore. CONANT, after EWALD, observes that the singular here has the effect of a collective. So HEILIGSTEDT: Malignant ulcers. ZÖCKLER, in Lange, regarding it as the *Elephantiasis*, speaks of it

as the Arabian or worst kind of leprosy; called also *lepra nodosa*, or *tuberculosa*, from the greatly swollen lumps, or boils, which give to the extremities the appearance of an elephant's legs, whence its name. BARNES, after GOOD, calls it a universal ulcer, attended with violent pain and constant restlessness; named by the Arabs, *qudham*, and said to produce a grim, distorted, lion-like set of features, hence called *Leontiasis*. CHRYSOSTOM observes that it made Job like Lazarus, but in a far worse condition. The Jewish doctors say that the disease, in Job's case, lasted a whole year; while SUIDAS—we know not on what grounds—makes it to have continued seven.

CHAPTER III.

VERSE 5. "*Let the blackness of the day terrify it.*" Margin, "*Let them terrify it as those who have a bitter day.*" The expression כְּמִרִירֵי־יוֹם (*chimrire-yom*) gives rise to two classes of interpretations, according as the initial letter is regarded as a part of the noun, or as a particle. In the former case, it is best rendered "obscurations, or darkenings of the day:" from כָּמַר (*chamar*), an unused root, signifying "to be dark, or blackened, as with heat." So GESENIUS, who thinks the reference is to eclipses, always regarded by the ancients as portending calamities. The view also of BOCHART, NOYES, FAUSSET, ZOCKLER in Lange, &c. The first of the two nouns is thus regarded as an augmentative; the simple form כְּמִירָא (*chemira*, from כָּמַר *chemar*, "to be dark, or sad"), being applied in Syriac (Matt. xvi. 3) to a dark and lowering sky. So SCOTT, who translates it "greatest sorrows," and in his metrical version: "Boding signs from all the quartered sphere." LEE classes it with a sort of superlative in Arabic words signifying colours, &c., formed by reduplicating the last radical letter, and occasionally introducing a long vowel; and so renders the expression "blackest things of the day"—blackest terrors. Of the earlier interpreters, JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS render the words: "Darkness of the day." COCCEIUS: "Blacknesses of the day,"—dark, hot, pestilential vapours. PAGNINUS, VATABLUS, and PISCATOR: "Heats, or vapours, of the day." The Tigurine translators: "Most burning heats of the dog-days." Bishop HALL: "A continued darkness." Among later expositors, GOOD has: "Blasts of noontide"—the *simoom*, or hot wind of the desert. FRY: "Black blasts of the day." BOOTHROYD: "Thunder-clouds, blackening the day." JENOUR: "Black darkness by day." CAREY and CONANT, after GESENIUS: "Darkenings of the day." BERNARD: "Black vapours." OLSHAUSEN, DILLMANN, and DELITZSCH: "Darknesses of the sun," as from clouds. HERDER, viewing the expression figuratively: "Blackness of misfortune." UMBREIT understands by it: "Magical incantations which darken the day." GROTIUS and CODURCUS regard the first noun as used for כְּמָרֵי (*chimre*) or Chemarims, a name given in the Old Testament to certain idolatrous priests (Zeph. i. 4; Hos. x. 5; 2 Kings xxiii. 5), and thus denoting "priests of the day,"—astrologers, who distinguish the character of days as lucky and unlucky, like the Roman "*prefecti fastorum*."

If the initial letter כ, however, be viewed not as a part of the noun, but as a particle, it may be regarded either as one of comparison, or of emphasis. In this case, the noun מְרִירֵי (*merire*) will be viewed as derived from מָרַר (*marar*) "to be bitter," as in Deut. xxxii. 24. So the translators of the ancient versions appear to have understood the expression. The Septuagint has: "Let the day be cursed;" or, according to GRABE's emendation: "Let the day be troubled." The VULGATE: "Let the day be involved in bitterness." The TARGUM, SYRIAC, and AQUILA: "As bitternesses of the day." So MARTIN's French: "As the day of those to whom life is bitter." DIODATI's Italian: "The bitterest days." MERCER and MORUS, like our marginal reading: "As those bitter in days." MUNSTER, after the Syriac: "The bitternesses of the day." SEB. SCHMIDT: "As bitternesses of day,"—rather to be so called than day itself. SCHULTENS: "As it were the bitter things of the day,"—viz., misfortunes. ROSENMÜLLER: "According to the bitternesses of the day"—calamities which render a day black and ill-omened, as Amos viii. 10. ADAM CLARKE: "The bitterness of a day." YOUNG: "As the most bitter of days." LE CLERC derives the word, as the Septuagint appears to have done, from אָרַר (*arar*) "to curse:" "as those who curse the day."

VERSE 8. "*Who are ready to raise up their mourning;*" Margin: "*Or leviathan.*" A

cause which has also two classes of interpretations, according as the noun לִוְיָתָן (*livyathan*) is regarded as derived from לָוָה (*lavah*) "to twist into folds," and so meaning a serpent, or sea-monster, as in all the ancient versions; or from לָיָה (*layah*) "to mourn," and so denoting lamentation, as in our authorised version. Of the other two words in the clause, הָעֲתִידִים (*ha-'athidhim*, from עָתַד (*'athadh*), unused in Hebrew but found in Chaldaic; in the *Pael* form, עַתַּד (*attsdh*) "to appoint or prepare," like the Arabic عَتَدَ (*attuda*, Vth. conjugation, to be skilled in an art), rather denotes, "those who are skilled, or expert." So SCHULTENS, GESENIUS, NOYES, and ZÖCKLER. The SEPTUAGINT has: "He who is to rouse up," &c. The VULGATE: "Those who are prepared," &c. So the TARGUM, AQUILA, and SYMMACHUS, as well as LUTHER, MARTIN, and DIODATI. עוֹרֵר (*'orer*), properly "to raise up from sleep," as Ps. xliv. 23. So DE WETTE: "To wake up." SCOTT, observing that the sign of the infinitive is omitted, views the expression as a periphrasis for the future tense of the indicative, according to the Syriac idiom. The same appears to have been done by the translator of the Septuagint.

Of those who regard the noun as derived from לָוָה (*lavah* = لَوَى) "to twist," with the final syllable תָּן (*tan*) as the terminative form of the noun, are BOCHART, SCHULTENS, DATHE, and GESENIUS, who understands by the word a serpent of the larger kind, especially, as in chap. xli. 1, a crocodile. The SEPTUAGINT, followed by the COPTIC and the ITALA, renders it, "the great whale." The VULGATE leaves the word untranslated, "Leviathan." According to NOYES, the word is a common name to denote monstrous animals of different kinds, here perhaps a monstrous serpent. BARNES: Used here to to represent the most fierce and powerful of animals. ZÖCKLER: The great dragon—the enemy of the sun and moon—which, according to an ancient superstition, seeks to cause darkness by swallowing them up. According to GROTIUS, CODURCUS, and SEB. SCHMIDT, the persons in the text are represented as skilled in stirring up monsters by magic incantations. DÖDERLEIN and UMBREIT understand, "charming of serpents." According to OSIANDER, NOYES, BARNES, and others, the reference is to sorcerers, or persons supposed to possess the power of making any day fortunate or unfortunate, or even to call forth terrific monsters from the forest or the deep, in order to gratify their own malice, or that of others, of whom Balaam is viewed as an example. WEMYSS has: "Skilled in conjuring up Leviathan." Dr. CHALMERS understands: "Magicians and conjurers who raise, or pretend to raise up, infernal spirits by their spells. HIRZEL, HAHN, and SCHLOTTMANN: the Constellation called the Dragon, between the Great and the Little Bear, or some other of the same name. So MAURER, who refers to the words of Horace as a parallel: "*Quæ sidera excantata voce Thessala lunamque cælo deripit.*" LEE, understanding the whale, or some other monster, translates: "Who are ready to stir up a leviathan,"—which, he adds, none but the most desperate would do. BERNARD: "Ready to arouse the crocodile." CONANT: Skilled to rouse the Leviathan." HUPFNAGEL observes that the expression is probably employed to denote the undertaking of a most perilous task. JENOUR renders it, "Prepared to stir up the Leviathan to battle;" *i.e.*, persons who hate life, and are prepared to expose themselves to certain death. So BOOTHROYD, who observes that in chap. xli. 8—10, to arouse Leviathan is represented as inevitable destruction. Various other allusions are conjectured to be made in the expression. Reference is supposed by some to be made to the invocation of Typhon, the author of destruction, whose symbol was the crocodile, such as is found on a papyrus roll from Thebes. So CAREY, who also thinks an allusion may be made to an ancient custom of the Egyptians in hunting the crocodile on a particular day, and then, after killing it, throwing its dead body before the temple of their god. FAUSSET thinks a reference is made to those who claimed the power of controlling or rousing up wild beasts at their will. CALMET sees an allusion to the Atlantes, a people of Ethiopia, who were ready to kill and eat the crocodile. SIR G. WILKINSON, quoted by Carey, refers to the Tintyrites, who were expert in catching and overcoming the crocodile in the water. ADAM CLARKE thinks that persons are meant who are desperate enough to provoke the crocodile to tear them in pieces. M. HENRY thinks allusion is made to fishers who, being about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curses they can invent, in order to weaken its strength (!) Some of the older interpreters, as COCCEIUS, TIRINUS, and CARTWRIGHT, thought the allusion also to fishers, but as cursing under the vexations and disappointments of their calling. HUTCHESON, of Edinburgh, regarded the allusion as made to mariners, who, in a storm, curse the day they went to sea, and are ready by their

wishes to evoke the sea-monsters to swallow them up. CHAPPELOW, followed by COBBIN, thinks those persons meant whose business it was to curse the days esteemed ominous and inauspicious. SANCTIUS accounted for the expression on the ground that in execrations men commonly introduce things that are most horrible, as the leviathan. SCOTT, in his metrical translation, has: "Rouse fierce Leviathan from his oozy bed;" and adds, that probably the crocodile is meant, and that as it is natural to lament those who so miserably perished with bitter imprecations on the disastrous day, Job calls for the assistance of such language. Another construction of the words has been proposed, and has been adopted by SCHULTENS, and ROSENMÜLLER: "Let those who are skilled in that art, curse or brand it (his birthday) as the day that rouses up Leviathan" —as the dire mother of direst evils. Similarly COLEMAN: "as men promptly curse the day that evokes the crocodile from the deep." Leviathan was regarded by AMBROSE, and the Fathers in general, as another name for Satan, whom Christ was to encounter and overcome. GREGORY thought the persons in the text to be those who fell by the devil's deceit. GUALTHER supposes them to be those who evoke Satan by incantations and witchcrafts. OSIANDER regards the word as equivalent to רְפָאִים (*rephraim*) the "spirits of the dead" mentioned in chap. xxvi, 5. (in the E.V. "dead things"); and considers it here as denoting the Evil One, and spectres in general. By most of the earlier interpreters, who regarded the word as denoting some monster, the *whale* was the creature understood. So COCCEIUS, SCULTETUS, JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS, &c.

The sense of "lamentation," as in our authorised version, from לִיָּה (*layah*)=אֲלָה (*alah*) "to mourn," was generally preferred by the earlier translators, as PISCATOR, MERCER, PAGNINUS, MORUS, MONTANUS, and VATABLUS. MARTIN, in his French version, has: "Who are ready to renew their mourning." DIODATI, in his Italian: "Always ready to make new lamentations." FRY renders the passage: "who are ready at raising their lamentations;" but supposes that the word is derived from לוּ (*loo*), "O that;"— this syllable perhaps being the commencement of the solemn dirges or ululations of hired mourners, still common in the East; like the ἐλελελελεῦ of Io in Prometheus Vinctus, the *ululu* of the Irish, and the ולולו (*ululu*) of the Arabians. According to TOWNSEND, the ideas of mourning and Leviathan are combined,—the mourning and that which was the cause of it; the allusion being to the idolatrous persecuting power that afflicted the Church of God between the commencement of the empire of the first Ninus, or Nimrod, and the calling of Abraham; and to the too late repentance of those who cursed the day when they gave their assistance to the founding and consolidating of that empire.

VERSE 14. "*Which built desolate places for themselves.*" הַבֹּנִים (*habbonim*), "who built up," not "who built again." So ZÖCKLER, as against CASTALIO, GOOD, and others. CAREY: "Who were building," *i.e.*, when overtaken by death. חָרְבוֹת (*kharābhoth*), plura. of חָרְבָּה (*khorbah*) dryness, desolation, from חָרַב (*kharebh*), to be dried up, devastated; waste places, ruins: "who built ruins for themselves," *i.e.* splendid edifices, as palaces or tombs, soon to become ruins or great stone heaps. So GESENIUS, UMBREIT, WINER, NOYES, CONANT, ZÖCKLER, and most moderns. VULGATE: "Who build solitudes for themselves." The SEPTUAGINT appears strangely to have read the word as the plural of חֶרֶב (*kherebh*), a sword. The TARGUM, SYRIAC, and ARABIC, like the Vulgate, have: "Solitudes," or "desert places." So MARTIN and DIODATI. LUTHER: "The wilderness." PAGNINUS: "Solitary places." DRUSIUS: "Destroyed places." CASTALIO: "Ruins," fallen palaces or towers. MERCER and VATABLUS, like the Vulgate: "Solitudes." JUNIUS: "Splendid buildings in desolate places, where no one would have expected such." JENOUR: "Waste places." BOOTHROYD: "Ruins of former cities." GOOD: "Ruined wastes." YOUNG: "Wastes." LEE: "Places now desolate." PINEDA, followed by SCHULTENS, DÖDERLEIN, CAREY, and others, thinks the reference is to sepulchral monuments, as the pyramids. PARKHURST: "Dreary sepulchral mansions, where the body is *wasted*, or consumed." SCOTT, the translator, thinks that sepulchral grottoes are meant, such as those at Thebes, or the pyramids: "Whose burial mansions load the desert plains." MICHAELIS regards the words as equivalent to חֲרָמוֹת (*kharāmoth*), and translates it, "temples, shrines, mausoleums." ZÖCKLER observes that, though πι-χραμ (*pi-chram*, "the temple"), is the name given to the pyramids, it is, perhaps, not the same with חָרְבִּית; and that if mausoleums are intended, they are not necessarily those of Egypt. HIRZEL, with EWALD, DELITZSCH, STICKEL, &c., thinks mausoleums or pyramids are to be understood, and points to the ruins of Petra. BARNES observes that some of the most

wonderful sepulchral monuments are found in the land of Edom to this day. TOWNSEND thinks the reference may be to the building of the Tower of Babel. The expression לָמוֹ (*lamo*), "for themselves," is understood by some as meaning: "To make their name immortal." So MERCER, VATABLUS, DRUSIUS, ADAM CLARKE. CODURCUS: "In order to display their wealth and power, enjoy retirement, or form new colonies." GRYNŒUS: "To resist all-destroying death." CAREY: "For their own tombs." COLEMAN: "As habitations for themselves, either while living or dead." NOYES thinks that the expression is so nearly pleonastic that it may be omitted. BARNES, on the other hand, thinks it full of emphasis; the ruinous structure being made for themselves alone. UMBREIT sees in it Job's irony breaking out from the black clouds of melancholy.

CHAPTER XIX.

VERSE 23. *"O that my words were now written!"* The "words" understood as either—(1) *Those now to be uttered.* So JEROME, PISCATOR, CARYL, HENRY, &c. As an everlasting monument of his faith in the resurrection.—MAYER. Such as would come within the inscription on a rock; therefore, those contained in verses 25—27. —SCOTT. Or (2) *Those which he had already uttered* in defence of his innocence. So MERCER, NOYES, &c. All the declarations he had already made of his integrity, together with his solemn appeals to God.—WEMYSS. BARTH, in his "Bible Manual," combines both: "The words of his lamentation and sorrow misunderstood by his friends, as well as those of his hope, which he was now about to utter." GREGORY understood not so much his "words," as his sufferings. "Words" put for the things themselves.—POLYCHROMIUS. Instead of "written," WEMYSS and KITTO would read "recorded." CAREY: "Engraven." SCOTT says: "Written, perhaps, on linen: painting on linen very ancient among the Egyptians; the use of papyrus a later invention."

"O that they were printed in a book!" בַּסֵּפֶר (*bassēpher*) "in the, or a, book;" סֵפֶר (*sēpher*) from סָפַר (*sāphar*) to shave, engrave, write. וְיֻחָקוּ (*veyukhākoo*) "and were printed, or engraved;" Hophal form of חָקַק (*khākak*) to cut, make an incision, engrave. So GESENIUS. PISCATOR, however, thinks that the verb חקק does not mean to "engrave," but to "delineate" or "paint," and refers to Isaiah xxx. 8; xlix. 16; Ezek iv. 1. MERCER observes that the order of the words is inverted, and translates: "That they might be engraven in a book." JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: "Carved out." PAGNINUS: "Written out." SCULTETUS thinks that the first clause indicates simple writing; the second, writing in an entire book, or among histories or public records. So SCHULTENS understands בַּסֵּפֶר: "in a public record, in which more remarkable events were registered." J. H. MICHAELIS translates: "Who will put them into the book, that they may be engraven?" GRYNŒUS: "Engraven for eternal remembrance in all time to come." ADAM CLARKE: "Fairly traced out in a book, formed either of the leaves of the papyrus or on a sort of linen cloth." KITTO: "Engraven on a tablet of wood, earthenware, or bone." SCOTT observes that letters were supposed by Sir Isaac Newton to have been invented by the Edomites, from whom Moses learned them when he fled into Midian. NOYES renders the words: "O that they were marked down in a scroll!" CONANT: "In the book, where all might read them," as indicated by the presence of the article. CAREY thinks some particular book intended, perhaps that part of the Bible then extant, containing the records of the Creation and the history of the Antediluvian World. ZÖCKLER, however, thinks this unnecessary, and translates: "In a book,"—any book, or skin prepared for writing.

"That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" יֵחָצֵבוּן (*yekhatsebhoon*), Niphal, or passive form of חָצַב (*khatsable*), to cut, or cut out; "were cut." So GESENIUS and J. H. MICHAELIS. KITTO: "Graven." WEMYSS: "Sculptured." BOOTHROYD: "Cut deep." לָעַד (*la-adh*) from עָדָה (*'adhah,*) to pass; עַד (*adh*), primarily, a passage or progress; then perpetuity. GROTIUS conjectures the reading to have been לְעֵד (*le'-edh*) "for a testimony," which agrees with the version of the

Septuagint. בְּעֵט (*be-ēt*), "with a pen;" עֵט (*ēt*) being, according to Gesenius, a pen for writing on stone or metal. "And with lead," *i.e.*, poured into the letters carved with the iron pen for greater distinctness. So JARCHI, PISCATOR, BOCHART, JUNIUS, SCHULTENS, UMBREIT, and most of the moderns. The TIGURINE version, however: "In lead." So the VULGATE: "With a plate of lead." LUTHER: "Upon lead." A. CLARKE: "On leaden tablets." WEMYSS, BOOTHROYD, and KITTO: "On rolls of lead." TOWNSEND quotes PAUSANIAS, who says that near Helicon he was shown some leaden tablets, on which were engraven the works of HESIOD. TIRINUS observes that writing tablets among the ancients were made not only with wax, but *lead*, as is seen in the ancient tombs of Fabricius and Valesius, near Naples. It is known that with the Romans public acts were inscribed on leaden plates, as well as brazen ones. PLINY ("Nat. Hist., xiii. 11) says: "Formerly people wrote on the leaves of the palm and the inner bark of certain trees: afterwards, public monuments were written on rolls of lead; and soon after, private ones on linen and wax." SCULTETUS observes that for security against fire, Job wishes the inscription to be also in a rock. So MERCER, PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS. PAGNINUS and MONTANUS, however, translate: "In stone." PINEDA: "On a pillar of stone." CODURCUS and SCHULTENS think the allusion is to sepulchral pillars, with epitaphs inscribed on them. SEB. SCHMIDT translates: "On tables of stone." POCOCKE remarks that hieroglyphical characters are cut in the rock in the tombs of the kings at Thebes. SCOTT observes, from GREAVES, that an inscription of one line in the same characters is found in the second pyramid. LEE, after SCHULTENS and HALES, notices that it was customary with the ancient Arabs of Yemen to inscribe their precepts of wisdom on the rocks, in order to preserve them. HUFNAGEL observes that Orientals appear to have been accustomed to make inscriptions on the rocks. NIEBUHR saw such in his travels. Those high up on the rocks, at the Nahr el Kelb, near Beyroot, now pretty well known. A. CLARKE remarks that all the modes of writing then in use are apparently alluded to in this passage.

VERSE 25. "*For I know*," &c. Various opinions as to the nature and object of Job's present declaration. It has been viewed (1) as *a confession of his faith*, in opposition to the calumnies of his friends. So DRUSIUS, &c. More especially of his faith in the promised Redeemer. So SCHULTENS, MICHAELIS, ROSENMÜLLER, HALES, GOOD, PYE SMITH, &c. Of his faith in a future judgment for the vindication of his character. So SCOTT. Of his faith and hope in reference to the resurrection of the body. So CAREY, &c. Of his faith in the Redeemer, and an assured expectation of a happy resurrection.—CARYL. M. HENRY calls it "Job's creed or confession of his faith," declaring that he sought a better country (Heb. xi. 14), and appealing to the coming of the Redeemer. A. CLARKE says: "Job speaks prophetically; pointing out the future redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, and the general resurrection of the human race." Dr. CHALMERS observes that—"To the consolations of a good conscience, Job adds those of a far-seeing faith." Others view it as (2) the declaration of *an expectation which the close of the book shows to have been fulfilled*. So KITTO. An expression of the conviction that he should himself see the restoration of his honour and health; and that, although reduced to a perfect skeleton, he should be gladdened by an appearance of God on his behalf, and not on that of the others. So CHRYSOSTOM, JOHN of Damascus, and some of the early Greek Fathers; also some of the Reformed, as MERCER, GROTIUS, LE CLERC; those on the Continent with rationalistic tendencies, as JUSTI, KNOBEL, HIRZEL, STICKEL; supernaturalists, as DATHE, DÖDERLEIN, BAUMGARTEN-CRUSIUS, KNAPP, AUGUSTI, UMBREIT; even some of the directly orthodox, as v. HOFFMANN and HAHN; and in our own country WEMYSS, STUART, BARNES. Some regard it as (3) the expression of his *hope of seeing God in a spiritually glorified condition beyond the grave*. So EWALD, SCHLOTTMANN, DELITZSCH, DILLMANN, ZÖCKLER, DAVIDSON in his Introduction; and of Jewish interpreters, ARNHEIM and LOWENTHAL.

The force of the Copula at the beginning of the sentence has been variously understood. "For:" as in our English version. So the VULGATE, DUTCH, GENEVA, COVERDALE, and SCHULTENS. "Since," or "because:"—the older Hebrew interpreters. "Indeed:" so the SYRIAC, ARABIC, CASTALIO, PISCATOR, COCCEIUS, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS. "But:" LUTHER, DE WETTE, EWALD, LEE, CONANT, &c. DIODATI has: "Now." MERCER and PAGNINUS: "Also." MONTANUS: "And truly." SCULTETUS: "Yet"—notwithstanding my complaints. MENOCHIUS and DRUSIUS: "Yet,"—whatever you object to me, and although you continue wicked. DELITZSCH: "But yet." COLEMAN: "Verily." PYE SMITH: "Surely." FRY: "That." ZÖCKLER: "And." PINEDA observes

excludes all doubt, as in Gen. xlviii. 19." SCULTETUS: "Implies the faith which is both knowledge and trust." GRYNŒUS and HIRZEL: "The conviction that will not be shaken by opponents." The "I," emphatic—"I know, if you do not," So FAUSSET, HIRZEL: "I, for my part," in opposition to those who deny him. GRYNŒUS: "I, in whom the arrows of God and man are now sticking, as in a wicked person."

"*My Redeemer liveth.*" גֹּאֲלִי (*goali*) from גָּאַל (*gaal*) to redeem, deliver; my Redeemer. So GESENIUS. COCCEIUS: From גָּאַל (*gaal*) to claim as one's own, as Ps. cxix. 154; Isa. xliii. 1; Ruth iv. 6; Ps. lxxiv. 2; Isa. xlviii. 20; used also of things sold and consecrated: hence to redeem; גּוֹאֵל (*goel*), a relative who can claim or vindicate the honour, life, goods, &c., of another as his own (Lev. xxv. 25; Ruth iii. 13). SCULTETUS: Properly, a blood relation, who claims or recovers the alienated goods of a near relative, or himself, from slavery; or demands his blood, if slain, at the hands of the slayer (Num. xxxv. 12). GROTIUS: A deliverer, in a general sense. SCHULTENS and ROSENMÜLLER: An avenger. GRYNŒUS and PYE SMITH: A deliverer or avenger; here pointing to the Messiah. UMBREIT: A blood-avenger—meaning God, who should appear as his avenger before his death. LEE and HALES: An avenging Redeemer; viz. God, who should clear him of all charges. TOWNSEND: His Redeemer, (1) As the restorer of his temporal prosperity; (2) The vindicator of his innocence; (3) The redeemer of his soul from sin and death: the several offices of the Goel united in the person of Jesus Christ, who took our nature and became our Kinsman. גּוֹאֵל (*goel*) originally applied to a person whose duty it was to maintain the rights, interests, and reputation of a near relative, either by repurchasing his mortgaged inheritance, by marrying his widow and saving his family from extinction, by redeeming him from servitude, or by avenging his blood; applied elsewhere to God as a Deliverer from any kind of calamities. This believed, by some, to be the application here, without any reference to Christ. So MERCER, CALVIN, GROTIUS, LE CLERC, PATRICK, WARBURTON, HEATH, KENNICOTT, DATHE, DODERLEIN, DE WETTE, BARNES, &c. GESENIUS: גֹּאֲלִי חַי (*goali khai*), "my Redeemer liveth,"—God Himself will deliver me from these calamities. STICKEL observes: גֹּאֵל (*goel*) here used without דָּמִים (*haddam*), "of blood;" hence employed in the more general sense of a judicially valid intercessor and deliverer of life and property. So OLSHAUSEN and CONANT: Here a deliverer, not an avenger of blood. On the other hand, FAUSSET observes: Job uniformly despairs of restoration and vindication in this life (chap. xvii. 15, 16); therefore the allusion here to a vindication in a future life. According to MERCER, the Redeemer here is God the Father. So called as delivering the godly from their troubles. GROTIUS: The view of the Jews and Socinians; but the office only appropriately ascribed to God the Son, man's Kinsman; and so always understood elsewhere. Redemption peculiarly ascribed to Christ. Job's Redeemer the God-man, the "living one," yet standing on the earth. PFEIFFER: The Incarnate Word. PINEDA, TIRINUS, SCULTETUS, &c.: The opinion of the Fathers as well as of the earlier and modern evangelical interpreters in general. EPHREM SYRUS: A prediction of the incarnate Emmanuel. MUNSTER: "Of the Messiah, as the first-fruits of them that slept." COCCEIUS: Christ is Redeemer, as (1) Near of kin, (2) Redeeming by that right; (3) Taking the prey from the unrighteous possessor, and that without paying him any price; (4) Paying a price to the true Proprietor. All redemptions and deliverances of the Church and people of God ascribed to Christ, as Zech. ix. 11; Isa. lxiii. 9; Gen. xlviii. 16. TOWNSEND observes: Job, in the age of error, may be considered as the faithful witness in his day to the hope of the Messiah. BARTH, in his "Bible Manual," remarks: Though having no well-defined conception of the Messiah as his Redeemer, Job yet expresses his expectation that God would prove a Redeemer to him, and the Vindicator of his innocence. PINEDA: In the expression "My Redeemer," Job declares his singular love to Christ, as in the expression "My brother" (1 Kings xxx. 32). CARTWRIGHT: Job appropriates Christ to himself, and calls Him his own.

חַי (*khai*) "liveth" or "living;" always lives, is immortal and eternal. So DRUSIUS and MENOCHIUS. CARTWRIGHT: "Liveth," without distinction of time as past or future; God, the Eternal I am: Christ, as God, lives *from* eternity, while, as man, he lives *to* eternity: "Liveth,"—hath life in Himself as the Prince of life; also denotes His strength and power, as Ps. xxxviii. 19. COCCEIUS: "Job opposes the Redeemer's life to his own death: perhaps, also, alludes to the death of the Redeemer Himself" (Rev. SCULTETUS: Although he shall die

for me, yet is He the true and living God; the faith of the Old Testament saint is a true and saving faith in Christ (Gen. xlviii. 16; Acts iv. 12; xv. 11). JUNIUS: "My Redeemer liveth;" therefore, though men may bury my cause in oblivion, it remains safe with God. Others read: My Redeemer is the Living One. So SCOTT, PYE SMITH, Dr. HENDERSON. HALES translates: My Redeemer is living. Dr. THOMAS, in the "Homilist": My living Redeemer; like אֵל חַי the living God,—having life in Himself.

"*And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.*" A clause very variously interpreted and understood. אַחֲרוֹן (*akharon*) from אָחַר (*akhar*), to remain, tarry, or be behind; here rendered "at the latter day;" properly "the last," but may be used adverbially, with בְּ or לְ understood, as in Isa. viii. 23; xxx. 8, &c.; and then meaning "at last." "At length he shall stand (or appear) on the dust," *i.e.*, on the earth. So GESENIUS, HEILIGSTEDT, MAURER, NOYES. Or "Over the tomb," as EWALD, ZÖCKLER, and others. To witness for him: DELITZSCH. To protect him: FAUSSET. To deliver him: ZÖCKLER. Ancient translators seem to have read the verb variously; as אָקוּם "I shall rise." So the VULGATE: "At the last day I shall rise from the earth." יָקִים "He shall raise up." So the SEPTUAGINT: "He shall raise up my skin on the earth." יָקוּם "He shall stand up or appear." So the SYRIAC and ARABIC: "In the end he shall appear on the earth." The TARGUM: "And afterwards his redemption shall rise upon the earth." In this way THEODORET read the word: "The last one shall rise upon the dust, or the tomb." So most of the translators at and since the Reformation. LUTHER, however, following the Septuagint, has: "He shall hereafter awaken me out of the earth." But the Dutch and French (MARTIN'S) versions: "He shall remain the last on the earth." DIODATI'S Italian: "At the last day he shall stand over the dust." VATABLUS: "He shall stand over the earth," *i.e.*, in heaven. GROTIUS, CASTALIO, LE CLERC: "At the last he shall stand over the dust," or earth. MERCER, COCCEIUS, SCULTETUS: "The latter or last One, he shall stand over the dust," *i.e.*, on the earth, as being to remain for ever. The TIGURINE: "In the last time he shall stand over the dust," applying his power over it. BROUGHTON: "He shall rise upon the dust," *i.e.*, from death. JUNIUS "The latter one or last man," &c.,—living again in the resurrection and at the coming of Christ, compared with the former or first man, as in I Cor. xv. 42; perhaps Christ understood. MONTANUS: "The last one shall rise again from the dead," alluding to Christ, the first-fruits of them that slept; or, "He shall stand over the dust," *i.e.*, those lying in the dust. COCCEIUS: "The last," as never leaving us, or as remaining after all enemies are destroyed; or, last in life, alone immortal, ruling over death and the dust; or, as my deliverer, demanding me from the dust, having abolished the claim of death. SCULTETUS and GROTIUS: "Shall stand over the dust," as conqueror, raising it to life. CODURCUS: "The last shall stand over the dust," at the last judgment—the Son of God and the *goel* of our race. DRUSIUS and CARYL: "The last one," viz., the Redeemer. So SCHULTENS: "The last man"—an epithet of Christ—"He shall stand over dust,"—the dust of the grave, to claim this flesh from the spoiled prison of death; shall come as the avenger of a good cause and of oppressed innocence, and will put the crown of righteousness upon my head. GRYNÆUS: "The last," for, "At the last day." So WEMYSS, GOOD, DATHE, DÖDERLEIN: "At last he shall appear on the earth." HALES: "At the last day he shall stand over the dust," *i.e.*, over mankind—shall rise in judgment. FRY: "At the end he shall stand upon the earth." LEE: "In the last age or hereafter" (the "last days" of the prophets and apostles). CONANT: In after time. So NOYES, BARNES, HENDERSON. KITTO: "Hereafter or at last." Many of the moderns, however, prefer the other rendering of אַחֲרוֹן viz., "the last one." So both the MICHAELISES, STICKEL, MAURER, HEILIGSTEDT, DE WETTE, DELITZSCH, SCOTT, PYE SMITH, Dr. ALEXANDER, FAUSSET. ZÖCKLER says: "As the last one," surviving all, with special reference to Job himself. ROSENMÜLLER: "He shall stand to assist or avenge the dust, *i.e.*, the dead." HUFNAGEL, viewing עָפָר (*'aphar*) as from עָפַר "an enemy," has: "He shall stand over or overcome my enemies." A. CLARKE: He shall be manifest in the flesh, and shall stand over them who sleep in the dust, or who have been reduced to dust. CONANT: "He shall stand up," &c., as a judge, and will decide the case in my favour, as Ps. xii. 5; xliv. 26; or, "On the dust," *i.e.*, on the earth, including the sense of *vileness*. NOYES: "Dust," probably emphatic, as constrasted with heaven, the residence of the Creator. DÖDERLEIN

understands by "dust" the patriarch himself reduced to dust and ashes. So ZÖCKLER: "The dust of my decayed body or of my grave." KENNICOTT: "Over this dust." Dr. ALEXANDER: "By my dust."

The drift of this sublime declaration thus variously understood. By most the sentence is viewed as declarative of Job's assurance regarding the promised Redeemer and future resurrection of the body. CASTALIO: The reference is to the resurrection of Christ, to be followed by that of all men. The arguments in favour of this view, as given by COCCEIUS, SCHULTENS, and others: (1) The sublime preface; (2) A final judgment threatened by Job to his friends (verse 26); (3) His thoughts obviously lifted above this world, and the tone of his discourse now and henceforth more hopeful than before; (4) All hope in this life already given up (xvii. 5); (5) The opinion of the Fathers, as Jerome, Augustine, Cyprian, Gregory, &c.; (6) The interpretation of the Targum and the Septuagint; (7) The wish that this testimony should be read after his death, perhaps on a sepulchral pillar; (8) The certainty expressed by him as resting on the immovable foundation of faith, that his Redeemer would come; (9) The simplicity of this interpretation; (10) Its agreement with the argument and scope; (11) The truth of the thing itself; (12) The majesty of the words; (13) The joyful hope exhibited by the patriarch; (14) The oneness of the Spirit in patriarchs, apostles, and all the faithful. TOWNSEND observes: These words have always been interpreted by the Church as expressive of the patriarch's faith and hope in a spiritual Redeemer, who should restore him after the death of his body; hence embodied by the Churches of Rome and England in their offices for the dead. LEE speaks of the passage as "a recognition of the first promise made to Eve, and therefore a prediction of the Messiah." JEROME, in his Epistle to Pammachus, says: "None speaks so plainly of the resurrection *after* Christ, as Job does *before* Him." The passage was also applied by some of the Rabbis to the Messiah. Thus R. Hakkodesh: "God shall be seen in our flesh; as Job testifies: Out of my flesh I shall see God." The reference to an existence beyond the grave, apart from the resurrection of the body, understood by some modern interpreters, as SCHLOTTMANN, ZÖCKLER, CONANT, &c.

According to an opposite view, the reference is to a *figurative* resurrection of Job, and his restoration to a better condition in this life. So GROTIUS, MERCER, CALVIN, (who yet fluctuates between the two opinions,) CHRYSOSTOM, AMBROSE, THEOPHYLACT, &c. The argument in favour of this view, as given by MERCER, ROSENMÜLLER, BARNES and others: (1) Its agreement with the history; (2) Its harmony with other passages of Scripture where a resurrection is spoken of, as Ezekiel xxxvii.; (3) The views of the Hebrew writers, who, in searching for proofs of the resurrection, never mention this passage; (4) The doctrine of the resurrection not likely to be found in this place of the Old Testament alone, nor in the Old Testament at all; (5) Job's restoration to prosperity and happiness solves the difficulty of suffering innocence; (6) The expectation of restored health naturally kept by the poet before Job's mind; (7) The assurance of restoration natural to one conscious of suffering innocently; (8) The language, fairly interpreted, not necessarily implying a reference to a future and literal resurrection; (9) Such a view inconsistent with the argument, and with many other places in the book; (10) The resurrection never referred to as a topic of consolation either by Job or his friends; (11) Such a view wholly in advance of his age; (12) All that the words fairly convey met by the supposition that they refer to the events at the end. STICKEL observes, that the decision of the mystery is given in the Epilogue without the immortality of the spirit being in the remotest manner touched; and adds, that Job's vindication required to be on the earth, and before those who were acquainted with the matter, or the inscription would be meaningless NOYES: The idea of the resurrection inconsistent with the general design, the course of the argument, the connection of the discourse, and several express declarations, as vii. 7, 8; x. 20—22; xiv., *passim*. EWALD however, on the contrary, asserts: That through the certainty of that truth alone could the contest be victoriously carried on; while the more respectable of the Reformed Biblical interpreters essentially agreed with the Vulgate in understanding the passage of a literal resurrection. So many Orientalists and Hebraists, as SCHULTENS, both the MICHAELISES, WELTHAUSEN, ROSENMÜLLER, GOOD, &c. CONANT observes, that the views of early Christian Fathers, who differed in their interpretation of the passage, are of little account on either side, having been based on the defective translations of the Septuagint, the Itala, and the Vulgate.

"*And though after my skin worms destroy this body*" (וְאַחַר עוֹרִי נִקְּפוּ זֹאת *ve-akhar 'ori nikkephoo zoth.*) These words variously rendered and understood. נִקְּפוּ (*nikkephoo*, from נָקַף "to strike, or cut;" *Piel* form, to destroy; or, according to some, from

נָקַף=נָקַף "to surround." GESENIUS, in 1829, rendered the passage: "After they have destroyed my skin (equivalent to, 'After my skin has been destroyed'), this shall be," viz., that God shall appear. In 1840, he preferred to render it: "After my skin, which they shall have destroyed, this shall be." The SEPTUAGINT has: "he shall raise up my skin on the earth, which has endured such things." The VULGATE, followed by COVERDALE and LUTHER: "Again I shall be surrounded with my skin." TARGUM: "After my skin shall have been taken away, or burnt up, this shall be," viz., that my Redeemer shall remain the last. SYRIAC: "After this has spread all over and around my body." DIODATI: "However, after my skin, this body be corroded." MARTIN: "When, after my skin, this shall have been devoured." DUTCH: "After my skin has been eaten." TIGURINE: "After they (the Trinity) have surrounded this with my skin." CASTALIO: "After this (my body) shall be surrrounded with my skin." MONTANUS and PAGNINUS: "After they have bruised this my skin." MUNSTER: "After [worms] shall have gnawed this body." JUNIUS: "After [worms] shall have pierced this, when I wake up,"—reading עוּרִי (*'oori*) instead of עוֹרִי (*ōri*). PISCATOR: "Although after my skin they (worms) pierce this,"—supplying כִּי (*chi*), or אִם (*im*). MERCER: "After my skin (corroded and consumed with my whole body), they (the worms in my ulcers, or my extreme pains) have shaken this (viz., his body,—not named, as so deformed, but pointed to)." COCCEIUS: "After they have stripped this that remains of my skin, or this my skin,—the whole of it, even to this particle; or, after my skin has burst, there shall be this,—pointing to his body." VATABLUS: "After my skin (has been perforated,) pains have broken this [mass of bones]." GROTIUS: "Although not only my skin, but also this (the fat that is under it), disease has consumed." DE DIEU: "After my skin has been consumed, they (my redeemer) shall make this to follow," viz., that I shall see God. SEB. SCHMIDT: "After my skin has ceased to be," viz., after my death. CALOVIUS and GERHARD: "After my being raised up, this (all I see with my bodily eyes) shall be destroyed." J. H. MICHAELIS: "When, therefore, after my skin, worms shall have despatched this." LE CLERC: "If after my skin they have crushed this to pieces." HALES: "After my skin has been mangled thus." SCHULTENS: "After they (my pains and ulcers) have bruised my skin in this manner." STOCK: "After they shall have swathed my skin, even this." KENNICOTT: "After they (my adversaries) have mangled me thus." J. D. MICHAELIS, and SCOTT the translator: "My skin, which is thus torn, shall become another," *i. e.*, shall be renewed. DÖDERLEIN: "I shall cast away my skin," understanding זוֹחֵר for אַחַר. WEMYSS: "Though this skin of mine is thus corroded." GOOD: "After the disease has destroyed my skin." PYE SMITH: "Has cut down my skin." ADAM CLARKE: "After my skin they (diseases and afflictions) destroy this [wretched composition of misery and corruption]." ROSENMÜLLER: "When after my skin this [body] has been broken into fragments." BOOTHROYD: "If after my skin this [body] be destroyed." DE WETTE: "After my skin, which has been mangled, even this here." So EWALD, HIRZEL, and ZÖCKLER. NOYES: "Though with my skin this body be wasted away." DELITZSCH: "After my skin, which is thus mangled." CONANT, SCHLOTTMANN, and CAREY: "After this my skin shall be destroyed." BARNES: "Though after my skin the flesh be destroyed;" or, "after my skin has been pierced through thus." FAUSSET: "Though after my skin (is no more), this [body] is destroyed,"—the body not deserving to be named. FRY: "After I awake shall this be brought to pass,"—reading, like Junius and Calovius, עוּרִי instead of עוֹרִי.

"Yet in my flesh shall I see God." מִבְּשָׂרִי (*mibbesari*),—literally, "from my flesh,"—variously translated and understood. The VULGATE has: "in my flesh." The TARGUM: "Out of my body." MARTIN (French): "From my flesh." DIODATI (Italian): "With my flesh." PAGNINUS, MONTANUS, MERCER, PISCATOR, JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: "Out of my flesh." CASTALIO: "From my body." VATABLUS: "After my flesh has been wasted," or, "After the affliction endured in my flesh." So R. NACHMANN. MERCER: "Out of so great affliction of my flesh." COCCEIUS: "Out of my flesh," not put off, but received. CALVIN: "In my flesh,"—after I have been restored to a new state,—uncertain what. So GRYNŒUS: "Out of my revivified flesh." BROUGHTON: "From my flesh,—I being raised and clothed with flesh." GUSSET: "Out of my flesh, as my abode. J. H. MICHAELIS: "From out of my flesh." KENNICOTT: "Even in my flesh." ADAM CLARKE: Either, "See Him in my renewed body," or, "See Him as my kinsman in my flesh and blood." FRY: "Of my flesh," *i.e.*, of my nature and kindred, as Gen. ii., 23. LEE: "From or out of my flesh," *i.e.*, while

still in it. KITTO: "In his flesh before he died, or in his flesh restored to soundness." BARTH (Bible Manual): "When the flesh is raised up"—in the re-animated glorified body. FAUSSET and ROSENMULLER (Second Edition): "From my renewed body," as the starting point of vision, as Cant. ii. 9,—the next clause proving bodily vision to be meant. STICKEL: "Without my flesh,"—as a mere skeleton; Job now come to the point in which God, according to Satan's desire, "touched his bone and his flesh;" with only his life spared. MAURER: "After my flesh has been all wasted away, yet still in the body." So CHRYSOSTOM, UMBREIT, HIRZEL, HEILIGSTEDT, HAHN, and NOYES. BARNES: "Yet even without my flesh." COLEMAN: "Apart from my flesh." EWALD: "Without my flesh," *i.e.*, as a glorified spirit. So VAIHINGER, SCHLOTTMANN, DILLMANN, DELITZSCH, ZOCKLER.

"*I shall see God.*" According to PISCATOR, CODURCUS, and others, Job foretells the incarnation of the Divine Word. MERCER: "I shall contemplate him,"—discern His power, providence, and goodness in preserving me." GROTIUS: "Shall experience him propitious to me." So HUFNAGEL and ROSENMULLER. COCCEIUS: "Shall behold him in beatific vision," as Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15; Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2. MENOCHIUS: Shall see Christ with bodily eyes, but his Divine Esssence with the eyes of the mind. SCHULTENS: Shall then see God face to face, since access to him is denied me in this life; shall see God in glory,—not the God-man who is the *Goel*. SEB. SCHMIDT: Shall see God incarnate as the Messiah. DODERLEIN: From my condition, I shall understand that God wishes well to me and approves my life. LE CLERC: The expectation fulfilled when God spoke to him out of the whirlwind. STICKEL: Expresses the expectation of a vindication of his innocence before his death, though it should be only in the last moments of his life. So HOFMANN. NOYES: Shall see God interposing in my favour. DELITZSCH: Shall see God spiritually after death; Job's hope, not that of a resurrection, but of a life beyond the grave, and so a breaking through the idea of Hades. EWALD: Refers to the immortality of the soul in the spirit-world. Dr. THOMAS, in the Homilist: Refers to bodily, not mental, vision; the resurrection of the dead found taught here as resulting upon the advent of the Messiah. So AUGUSTINE: Job prophesies of the resurrection; "I shall be in my flesh when I see God." So CLEMENS ROMANUS, ORIGEN, CYRILL of JERUSALEM, EPHREM SYRUS, AMBROSE, EPIPHANIUS, JEROME, LUTHER, &c.

Verse 27. "*Whom I shall see for myself.*" "See," repeated for emphasis: LEE. לִי (*li*), literally "for me or myself," variously understood. The SEPTUAGINT renders the passage: "Which things I know in myself." VULGATE: "Whom I myself shall see." MERCER: "Whom I shall discern to be for me, by His kindness in preserving me." SCULTETUS, "For me," *i.e.*, for my good. So MONTANUS, PISCATOR, PAGNINUS, and COCCEIUS. JUNIUS and TREMELLIUS: "The same that I shall see for me." CASTALIO: "Whom I indeed myself shall see." VATABLUS: "I shall enjoy the sight of Him to my salvation." COCCEIUS: "Whom I shall see, not angry but abounding in love, to my life and joy, or as mine." MUNSTER: "On my side." So KENNICOTT, HALES, SCOTT, WEMYSS, BOOTHROYD. CODURCUS: "Whom I even contemplate as standing by me." GROTIUS: "I, I say, with these eyes shall see him,"—לִי being emphatic. GRYNCUS: "Whom I shall see as favourable to me, or as eternally mine." J. D. MICHAELIS: "For myself." So GOOD, BARNES, Dr. ALEXANDER. Dr. CHALMERS: "For myself and my own comfort." Dr. THOMAS: "In my proper personality." COLEMAN: "As my own." NOYES: "As my friend." KITTO: "Interposing on my behalf." FAUSSET: "For my advantage." So HEILIGSTEDT, MAURER, PYE SMITH. ZOCKLER: "For my salvation." DELITZSCH: "Whom I shall see, I, for my salvation." DE WETTE: "Yea, I shall see Him myself." CONANT: "Whom I, for myself, shall see." So SCHLOTTMANN. SCOTT: "Expresses more explicitly and emphatically his faith that in a disembodied state he should see God." CAREY: "Whom that I may see as my own,"—the object of the desire in the last clause. BARTH: "Anticipates partly his justification, and partly compensation for his sufferings." ADAM CLARKE: "Speaks as having a personal interest in the resurrection, as in the Redeemer."

"*And my eyes shall behold.*" The Septuagint translates רָאוּ (*raoo*) as past: "Which things mine eye hath seen." So MONTANUS, CODURCUS and COCCEIUS: "My eyes have seen." The latter explains by saying: "The eyes of my mind have seen and tasted beforehand in my heart the vision of God by the illumination of the Holy Spirit." CODURCUS translates: "I myself have seen with these eyes;" and adds, "applying to himself the resurrection common to all the saints." MERCER renders the verb as present: "Whom my eyes see—not corporeally but spiritually: I conte His power with the eyes of my

mind." JUNIUS, followed by CARYL, has: "Whom I myself shall see with these eyes, being restored, though now I be entirely dissolved." MUNSTER has: "Inasmuch as I myself shall behold him." SCHULTENS views the words as equivalent to—"I believe the resurrection especially of myself." ROSENMULLER: "I shall see with the eyes of my renewed body." HUFNAGEL: "I shall yet experience that God makes me happy." Dr. THOMAS, in the Homilist, observes that רָאָה (*raah*) implies bodily vision.

"*And not another.*" זָר (*zar*) from זוּר (*zoor*) to "turn aside;" a stranger. The word differently understood. GESENIUS renders it here "an adversary." "So PINEDA, BOLDUC, STICKEL, CAREY. MERCER, MONTANUS, and PAGNINUS: "A stranger." So DE WETTE and MICHAELIS. CONANT observes that זָר denotes only a national enemy, and translates: "Another." So SCHLOTTMANN. VATABLUS has: "Another," with "for me" understood. So DRUSIUS, COCCEIUS, GROTIUS. MERCER: "I who know my pain and grief and not a stranger." OSIANDER: "Not a hypocrite," a stranger in faith and hope. SCULTETUS and CODURCUS: "In this body and not another," as Isa. xxvi. 19. HENRY: "He and not another for him shall be seen;" or, "I and not another for me." CARYL: "I myself, the very man who now speaks, and not changed into another;" intimating a personal resurrection. So GREGORY and BEZA MAYER: "To show that as Christ lives again after death, so shall all the faithful, and that in the same bodies in which they lived before." GRYNÆUS: "Not only *your* eyes, who in this might think you had a precedency over me." HALES: "Not estranged from me." So KENNICOTT, DATHE, UMBREIT, WEMYSS, SCOTT, PYE SMITH. A. CLARKE: "Not a stranger, who has no relation to human nature." BOOTHROYD: "Not another's [eyes]." DELITZSCH: "I and not another person."

"*Though my reins be consumed within me,*" כָּלוּ כִלְיֹתַי בְחֵקִי (*caloo chilyothai bekheki*) literally: "My reins are consumed in my bosom." So GESENIUS and others; understanding: "From desire and longing for this consummation." The SEPTUAGINT has: "All things have been fulfilled to me in my bosom." VULGATE: "This my hope has been laid up in my bosom." TARGUM: "My reins are consumed in my bosom." SYRIAC: "My reins are consumed on account of my cause." COVERDALE: "My reins are consumed within me, when ye say," &c. GENEVA version: "My strength has been consumed and destroyed." VATABLUS: "My bowels have failed from affliction." SCULTETUS: "From sorrow and pain." LE CLERC: "From indignation." MERCER: "My reins have been consumed in my bosom"—בְחֵקִי (in my bosom) expressing the greater violence of his pain. PISCATOR and others supply, as in our authorized version: "Although." CODURCUS has: "My desires have been fulfilled in my bosom." The TIGURINE translators view the expression as equivalent to: "Which alone is my desire." Similarly, CARYL and HENRY: "I have nothing more to desire." DE DIEU: "My reins are consumed with desire in my bosom," as Ps. lxxxiv. 3. So SCULTETUS: "I also faint with desire of seeing him." COCCEIUS and SCHULTENS: "With desire of seeing him clearly and openly." Dutch Annotators: "With desire of obtaining so great a blessing." SEB. SCHMIDT connects with what follows: "Because ye say," &c. SCHULTENS regards the words as part of the desired inscription. J. H. MICHAELIS: "From desire of him, or of it, my reins are consumed in my bosom." So GREGORY: "I burn with desire of enjoying that wished-for time." To the same effect, J. D. MICHAELIS, DATHE, ROSENMULLER, DE WETTE, PATRICK, WEMYSS, SCOTT, and ZOCKLER. A. CLARKE: "My reins, *i.e.*, my desires are spent;" equivalent to: "Though now apparently at the point of death." KENNICOTT: "All this have I made up in my own bosom." PYE SMITH: "The thoughts of my bosom are accomplished." BOOTHROYD: "Accomplished shall be the desires of my breast." LEE: "When my reins," &c.; connecting with the preceding. HOMILIST: "Should my reins have been consumed," &c.

VERSE 18. "*Seeing the root of the matter is found in me.*" For בִּי (*bi*) "in me," upwards of a hundred of MSS. have בּוֹ (*bo*) "in him." The expression שֹׁרֶשׁ דָּבָר (*shoresh dabhar*), literally, "the root of a word or matter," very variously understood. The interpretations reducible to four:—(1) A ground of accusation; (2) A ground of dispute; (3) The true faith; (4) A holy life. The first and second are the most probable, and now generally adopted: "[How] shall we find the root of the dispute or ground of accusation in him?" So GESENIUS, DELITZSCH, NOYES, CAREY, ZOCKLER, and others, reading נִמְצָא (*nimtsa*) as first person plural in Kal. The SEPTUAGINT has: "And find the root of the word in him." VULGATE and TARGUM: "And let us find the root of a word against him." LUTHER: "And find a matter against him." COVERDALE: "We have

found an occasion against him." MARTIN (French): "Since the foundation of my words is found in me." DIODATI (Italian): "Since the root of the word is found in me." So MONTANUS, MERCER, VATABLUS, PAGNINUS, PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS. COCCEIUS: "And the root of the matter has been found in me," or is in me; change of person for "in him." Mercer understands the expression as implying Job's innocence. CODURCUS: "And that the cause of the quarrel is in me." So DE DIEU, POOLE, and SCHULTENS. GRYNÆUS: "The cause," &c. viz., that I am a wicked man, and so deserving the calamities. HUFNAGEL: "Why sought we the cause of his misfortune in himself?" AQUINAS, JEROME, BEDE, SANCTIUS, understand by "The root," &c., the words which Job had spoken, or some other charge which the friends brought against him. According to TIRINUS: "An occasion of calumniating him." OSIANDER: "Of chiding him." The Dutch Annotators regard it as the affliction he endured, or the confession he had just made. COCCEIUS: "The ground of speaking boldly." VATABLUS: "Truth and innocence." PISCATOR: "Solid arguments." GROTIUS: "A good foundation." CODURCUS translates: "The root of the question;" and understands it of the faith and hope of the resurrection. According to the Assembly's Annotations: "The root of the Divine Word, or promise of a Redeemer." J. H. MICHAELIS and SEB. SCHMIDT understand the expression as: "The foundation of his faith." KENNICOTT and SCOTT have: "The truth of the matter." HALES, with the Dutch Annotators: "The strength of the argument" The TIGURINE: "The foundation of the matter of salvation." CARTWRIGHT: "Integrity of heart; the grace of God; true faith." So MAYER, SIMON, J. D. MICHAELIS, BARNES, and FAUSSET. LE CLERC: "The Word of God." BARTH: "The assurance he has just expressed." GOOD translates: "When the root of the matter is disclosed in me." WEMYSS: "Since there is no ground of accusation in me." FRY: "A ground of accusation is invented against me."

CHAPTER XXXII.

VERSE 2. "*Elihu*" אֱלִיהוּא "my God is He;" or, according to some: "My God is Jehovah." Various opinions concerning him, both as to his personality, speeches, and character. He has been considered by some as Balaam, the son of Beor. So JEROME, BEDE, LYRA, and some Rabbins. BEDE saw in him a type of the enemies of the church. Bishop WARBURTON thinks him to have been Ezra, the scribe. Some, as COLEMAN, have supposed him to be the Son of God—a manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity in the form of a man; a prelibation of His incarnation; what Melchizedech was to Abraham. HODGE regards him as a representative character of the Messiah. KITTO makes him a comparatively obscure and unknown person. According to KIEL and others he was a fourth friend of Job. ZÖCKLER understands him to have been a near kinsman of the Patriarch, and not belonging to the party of friends. According to GREGORY: A mere braggadocio; full of pride and vainglory; had the knowledge of God, and boasted of it not a little: from his pride and self-conceit, a type of those who, being left to themselves, become proud of their knowledge. So CODURCUS and MICHAELIS regard him as "highly conceited." STRIGELIUS sees in him an example of an ambitious orator, full of ostentation and audacity. So HERDER, UMBREIT, HAHN, DILLMANN. Professor TURNER speaks of him as manifesting a degree of veneration for Job and his friends, but speaking as an inflated youth, wishing to conceal his self-sufficiency under an appearance of modesty. According to VAIHINGER and others, he attempts to give a solution of the problem, but cannot. An entirely opposite view, however, is taken of him by AUGUSTIN, CHRYSOSTOM, AQUINAS, BRENTIUS, CALVIN, SCHULTENS, SCHLOTTMANN, ZÖCKLER, and most of the defenders of the authenticity of the speeches ascribed to him. According to COCCEIUS and others, he "excelled in modesty, as in wisdom." CARPZOV: "Younger, but not inferior to the others in piety." SCULTETUS: "Rightly, but too severely blames Job's speeches." SCOTT, the translator, observes that the sacred writer bears witness to his modesty, and that Job's attention evidences the pertinence of his speeches; while his plan for humbling Job was pursued and completed by the Almighty Himself. According to HUFNAGEL, he defines the state of the question; hits the true point of view in relation to Job's conduct more than his predecessors, neither suspecting his piety, nor charging him with vice, but objecting to his impatience, and a finding fault with Divine Providence: with much power of comprehension and real goodness of heart, he has, however, too little experience. KEIL, who

defends him, observes that it was not necessary to mention him in the preface; as parties were only introduced when they were to act or speak. According to ZOCKLER, he is only introduced to point out the sinfulness and perversity of Job's speeches, and to humble his pride; his part in the poem no breach of the connection between Job's speeches and God's, and not superfluous, though leaving the mystery unsolved. Elihu the only one of the speakers whose genealogy is given: hence, thought by LIGHTFOOT and ROSENMULLER to have been the author of the book.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VERSE 13. "*Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacock, or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?*" (MARGIN: "The feathers of the stork and ostrich.") The whole verse very variously rendered. In the first member, instead of "the peacock," the term רְנָנִים (*renanim*) is more correctly translated "ostriches," being derived from רָנַן (*ranan*) to "sing, or utter a shrill sound," and applied to the ostrich from its shrill nocturnal cry. So BOCHART, SCHULTENS, GESENIUS, and others. Other reasons given for this translation: (1) The authority of Jerome; (2) The resemblance in the meaning of רְנָנִים: and יְעֵנִים (*ya'anim*),—the latter being the ordinary name of the ostrich; (3) The alacrity of the ostrich depending all on its wings; (4) The ostrich otherwise not named. The ostrich is literally the "crying bird;" the Arabs being accustomed to name things rather from their character. So REISKE and FAUSSET. The word in the text first rendered "peacock," by POMARIUS, and then hesitatingly adopted by PAGNINUS, MONTANUS, VATABLUS, MERCER, &c., and all modern versions: BOOTHROYD. נֶעֱלָסָה (*ne'elasah*) here rendered "goodly," is rather the Niphal of the verb עָלַס (*'alas*) to "rejoice, exult," as in chap. XX. 18; or, according to others, to make a vibrating noise. GESENIUS renders the word: "Moveth joyfully." SCHULTENS: "Is full of exultation; is always moving." According to MERCER, the word is rarely found in Scripture, but is cognate with עָלַץ (*'alats*) or עָלַז (*'alaz*) to "exult, or triumph." DRUSIUS, COCCEIUS, and SCULTETUS render the clause: "The wing of the peacocks is joyful, or moves joyfully. VATABLUS: "Is full of joy and pleasure." MERCER: "Does the wing of the peacock exult joyfully from thee?" PAGNINUS: "The peacock exults in its wings." GROTIUS: "Canst thou give the exulting wings of the peacocks?" MUNSTER: "A wing to exult, or to be exulted in." MONTANUS: "The wing of the exulting ones is joyful." DODERLEIN: "She is one that exults with sounding wing"—supply, "does she fly by thy wisdom?" STICKEL: "The ostrich rejoices with fluttering wings." HUFNAGEL: "Joyfully move the sounding feathers and wing." MICHAELIS: "To the morning dawn the ostrich lifts its wings." UMBREIT: "The wing of the ostrich [which] lifts itself joyfully." HERDER: "A wing with joyous cry is uplifted yonder." SCOTT and BOOTHROYD: "The wing of the ostrich is triumphantly expanded." STOCK: "Is set to flutter." GOOD and WEMYSS: "The wing of the ostrich tribe is for flapping." PARKHURST: "Quivers, or flutters up and down." ROSENMULLER: "Exults." COLEMAN: "Flaps exultingly." NOYES and FAUSSET: "Moveth joyfully." LEE: "In the exulting wing of the ostrich [wilt thou put thy trust?]" BARNES: "The wing of the exulting fowls moves joyfully;" not their beauty, but their exulting, joyful, triumphant appearance being the object of attraction. FRY: "Is the flapped wing of the ostrich from thee?" CAREY: "The wing of the ostrich thrilleth joyously." CONANT: "Waves exulting." DE WETTE: "Swings joyfully." ZOCKLER: "Flaps joyfully." Of the ancient and earlier versions, the SEPTUAGINT has: "The wing of the rejoicing ones;" leaving נֶעֱלָסָה untranslated. The VULGATE: "The wing of the ostrich is extolled." SYRIAC: "The wing of those that praise is lifted up." ARABIC: "The wing of praise." TARGUM: "The wing of the wild cock, which sings and exults." SYMMACHUS: "The wing of exultation grows around." AQUILA: "The wing of the praising ones folds up." COVERDALE: "The ostrich, whose feathers are fairer," &c. LUTHER: "The feathers of the peacock are finer," &c. MARTIN (French): "Hast thou given to the peacock that plumage which is so brilliant?" DIODATI (Italian): "The wings of the peacock, are they beautiful by thy doing?"

The rendering of the second member of

the verse (אִם אֶבְרָה חֲסִידָה וְנֹצָה *im ebhrah kasidhah ve-notsah*) equally various. According to GESENIUS, אֶבְרָה (*ebhrah*) from the unused Root אָבַר (*abhar*), probably "to be strong, able to mount aloft;" a pinion or strong feather: distinguished from כָּנָף (*canaph*) a wing, and נֹצָה (*natsah*) a common feather. PISCATOR, and some earlier interpreters, make the word, which is elsewhere a "feather," to be here an "ostrich." The SEPTUAGINT leaves the words נֹצָה and חֲסִידָה untranslated. The VULGATE has: "[the wing of the ostrich is extolled] like the wing of the heron and the hawk;" reading נֹצָה as if נֵץ or נְצָה. SYRIAC and ARABIC: "It flies, and comes, and builds its nest." COPTIC: "If the stork and ostrich could comprehend it;" which seems to be as destitute of meaning as the Septuagint itself. COVERDALE: "[Fairer] than the wings of the sparrow-hawk." LUTHER: "Than the wings and feathers of the stork." MARTIN (French): "Or to the ostrich [gavest thou] the wings and the feathers?" DIODATI (Italian): "Has the ostrich its feathers and plumage from thee?" MERCER, VATABLUS, and PAGNINUS: "Is the wing of the stork and its feathers so?" *i.e.*, is it joyful or a cause of pleasure? or, "has the stork such a wing and plumage?" or, "is it from thee?" MUNSTER: "Or hast thou given wings and plumage to the stork?" SCULTETUS: "Or the wing of the stork and ostrich?" GROTIUS, PISCATOR, JUNIUS, and TREMELLIUS: "Or feathers to the stork and ostrich?" COCCEIUS: "Or if you wish a larger wing, that of the stork and ostrich." CASTALIO, including the preceding member: "Which are more noble, the wing of the ostrich, or the feathers and plumage of the stork?" So OSIANDER: "Are the wings of the ostrich more elegant than the wing and feather of the stork?" TIGURINE version: "The wing of the ostrich bears the palm, if you compare with it the wing or feather of the stork." BOCHART: "[The wing of the ostrich exults]; verily the wing of the stork and the feathers;" *i.e.*, which are verily a wing and plumage as is in the stork; or, "the wings, I say, of the stork?" כ being understood as in Genesis xix. 9; the ostrich being not so much a bird as a beast; whence the Arab proverb: "The ostrich is neither bird nor camel;" and its name among the Persians, the camel-bird; as resembling a camel in its neck, height and walk, and a bird in its bill and feathers. SIMON: "Does it resemble the tail and feathers of the stork?" SCHULTENS: "Is its wing and plumage an affectionate one?" with allusion to the stork. HUFNAGEL and MICHAELIS: "The ostrich flies like the stork and the hawk." DODERLEIN: "With the feathers of the stork and the hawk." STOCK: "Hath her affection taken wings and flown away?" PARKHURST: "But is it the wing of the stork and its plumage?" STICKEL: "Is it the stork-like, affectionate, pinions and feathers?" EWALD: "Is it a pious pinion and plumage?" אִם being interrogative. DE WETTE: "Is his wing also affectionate, and his plumage?" SCOTT: "Is it the pinion and feathers of the stork?"—not like the stork, providing for the security of its young. UMBREIT: "Is it like the quill and feathers of the pious bird the stork?"—is it like the pious bird? surely not. NOYES: "But is it with loving pinion and feathers?" CAREY: "Is the feather and plumage that of the stork?" BARNES: "Has it the wing and plumage of the stork?"—flying without being endowed with the wings of the stork, and contrasted in its habits with those of that bird. BOOTHROYD: "Her pinions and feathers as those of the stork." COLEMAN: "Truly they have goodly pinions and plumage." FRY: "Or is the swollen pinion and plumage from thee?" LEE: "Or are her choice feathers and head-plumage from thee?" GOOD and WEMYSS: "But the wings of the stork and the falcon are for flight." ROSENMULLER: "Truly its wing and plumage is like that of the stork." ZOCKLER: "Though, is it a pious pinion and plumage?"

CHAPTER XL.

VERSE 15. "*Behold now behemoth.*" Various opinions as to what is meant by the term "behemoth." According to GESENIUS, בְּהֵמוֹת (*behemoth*) is the plural of בְּהֵמָה (*behemah*, from the unused Root בָּהַם (*baham*) = بهم in the Xth conjugation, "to be dumb"), a quadruped of the larger sort, living on the land; here the plural of majesty, denoting a large quadruped: the hippopotamus. So BOCHART: the river-horse or hippopotamus; like the Leviathan, an inhabitant of the Nile: the termination וֹת (*oth*) however, being, according to Bochart, not the sign of the

plural, but of the Egyptian singular, the animal being Egyptian. The SEPTUAGINT has: "Beasts." TARGUM: "The animal." The VULGATE, SYRIAC, and ARABIC, like the English Version, leave the word untranslated. MERCER, CASTALIO, and COCCEIUS, like Gesenius, consider the plural to be used on account of the great size of the animal. GROTIUS thinks it equivalent to "the animal of animals;" *i.e.*, the most excellent animal. According to MAIMONIDES, the term includes all land animals of monstrous size. So apparently the Septuagint. DR. LEE, in like manner, renders it "the beasts." The term, however, generally regarded as denoting a distinct species of animal, as—(1) distinct species are described in the former chapter; (2) It is here compared with other species; (3) The description is not suitable to all beasts of the field. The animal intended formerly regarded very generally as the *elephant*. So most of the earlier interpreters, both Catholic and Reformed, and all the Hebrew expositors. So the Geneva and Dutch versions, and the Italian of Diodati. According to MERCER: "Some animal larger and more monstrous than the elephant. Modern interpreters generally consider the *hippopotamus*, or river-horse, as especially intended. Bishop PATRICK says: "Not the elephant, which never lies among the reeds, but an animal of that region—the hippopotamus. CONANT: "The river-ox, the appropriate name of the animal commonly known as the hippopotamus, or river-horse, the word being probably its Egyptian name. ROBINSON and CALMET derive the name from the Egyptian "*pe*" (the definite article "the"), "*ehe*," an ox, and "*mouth*," water; the water or river-ox, the name being modified like other foreign words. According to KITTO, the word is the plural of excellence; denoting the chief and most powerful of herbivorous animals known to Job, and living in his neighbourhood. GOOD thinks neither the elephant nor the hippopotamus exactly intended, but an animal now extinct. So A. CLARKE. FAUSSET thinks the description agrees partly with the elephant and partly with the hippopotamus, but exactly in all the details with neither; and that it is rather intended as a poetical personification of the great Pachydermata or Herbivora, the idea of the hippopotamus being predominant. According to REISKE and BYTHNER, the word indicates "beasts" in general; the peculiar name not being here given, as unnecessary from the description. COCCEIUS, FRY and others, view the animal, called "the beast" by way of eminence, as one and the same with Leviathan. SAMUEL WESLEY queries whether it is not the animal alluded to by the Psalmist (Psalm lxviii. 30): "Rebuke the company of the spearman;" *Margin*: "The beasts of the reeds;" BOOTHROYD: "The wild beasts of the reeds."

CHAPTER XLI.

VERSE 1. "*Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook.*" The term "Leviathan" (לִוְיָתָן) rendered here by the SEPTUAGINT, SYRIAC, and ARABIC, "the dragon." The VULGATE and TARGUM leave it untranslated. Almost all the earlier interpreters understood the *Whale* to be the animal intended. BEZA and DIODATUS among the first to incline for the *Crocodile*. GROTIUS remarks: "From terrestrial he passes to marine animals." SANCTIUS is uncertain which animal of the whale kind is meant; and observes that the *Balæna* would not be unknown to Job, as being found, according to Pliny, in the Arabian Gulf. CODURCUS remarks that the whale is found in the Mediterranean Sea. According to DRUSIUS, some large unknown fish akin to the dragon is meant. SCHULTENS, with the Hebrew interpreters, thinks the animal to be a terrestrial dragon. LEE: "A sea monster in general; though the description rather suits the *whale*, and more particularly one of the Dolphin tribe, the *Delphinus Orcus Communis*, or common Grampus." KITTO: "A sea monster: here the crocodile. FAUSSET: "Literally, the twisted animal, gathering itself into folds: a poetic generalization for all cetacea, serpentine, and saurian monsters, especially the crocodile; described after the river horse, both being found in the Nile. Bishop PATRICK observes that the whale is not armed with scales, nor impenetrable, nor creeping on the earth; and that therefore the *crocodile* is the animal intended. S. WESLEY remarks that the crocodile was probably once in Palestine; a town named Crocodilopolis, or the city of the Crocodile, having stood in the neighbourhood of Mount Carmel. A. CLARKE thinks some extinct animal of the waters is probably intended. DODERLEIN thinks the word a general name of a very large and cruel beast, the real name being gathered from its attributes.

CHAPTER LXII.

VERSE 11. "*A piece of money.*" According to Gesenius and others, קְשִׂיטָה (*kesitah*), from the unused root קָשַׂט = כָּשַׂט (*kasata*) to "be just or true;" whence קְשׂט (*Kistoon*) "balances;" a certain weight of money, equal to about four shekels (Gen. xlii. 35; xxxiii. 19, compared with xxiii. 16). According to SCHULTENS, a stater, or lump of gold exactly weighed. SEPTUAGINT: "A lamb." So ABULWALID and ABEN EZRA. VULGATE: "A sheep." So SYRIAC, ARABIC, and COVERDALE. LUTHER: "A fine groschen." MARTIN and DIODATI: "A piece of money." So the early translators and expositors in general. GROTIUS and MERCER, after the Rabbins: "A coin with the figure of a sheep struck upon it." SCOTT: "Some species of current coin," from Gen. xxxiii 19, compared with Acts vii. 16. HUFNAGEL: "Apparently a piece of silver, not a coin." NOYES: "Probably a lump of silver of a certain weight." UMBREIT: "The metal weighed out, not coined." MICHAELIS: "A weight which cannot be defined." LEE: "Not a stamped coin but a certain weight." CAREY: "A weight in the form of a lamb, used for weighing money; as seen on Egyptian monuments, one being weighed against three rings." TOWNSEND: "Something weighed; each piece weighing four shekels." KITTO: "Probably a present of silver, the value of a lamb." BARTH: "A piece of money; a weight of gold or silver: a coin probably with the figure of an animal upon it." FAUSSET: "The term used instead of a shekel: a mark of antiquity." MAGEE and HORN: "Good reason to understand it as signifying a lamb." WEMYSS: "A girdle." BOOTHROYD: "Term derived from a Hebrew word denoting 'to be pure;' hence 'pure metal,' proved money." GREGORIUS: "Symbol of Job's tried fidelity."

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